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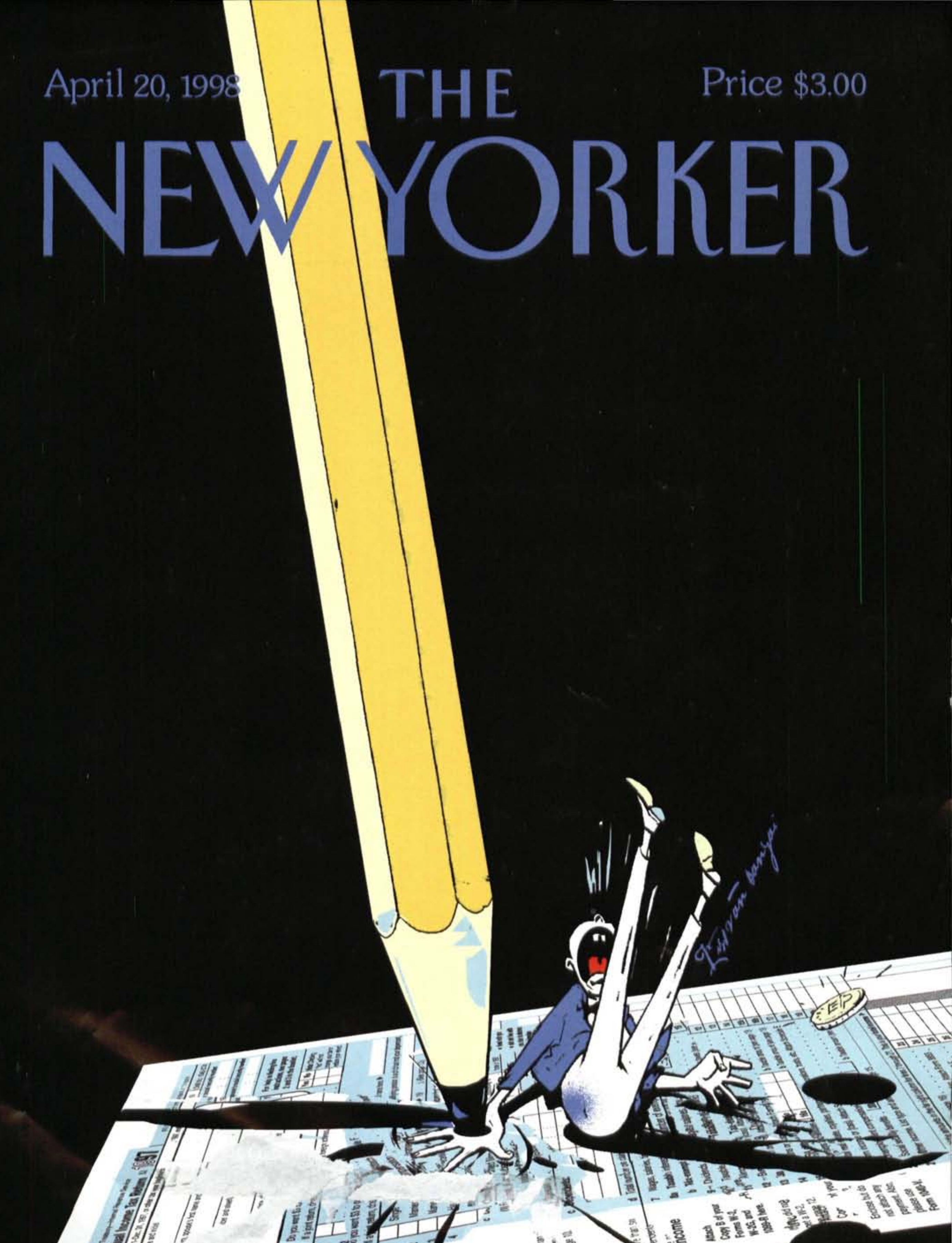
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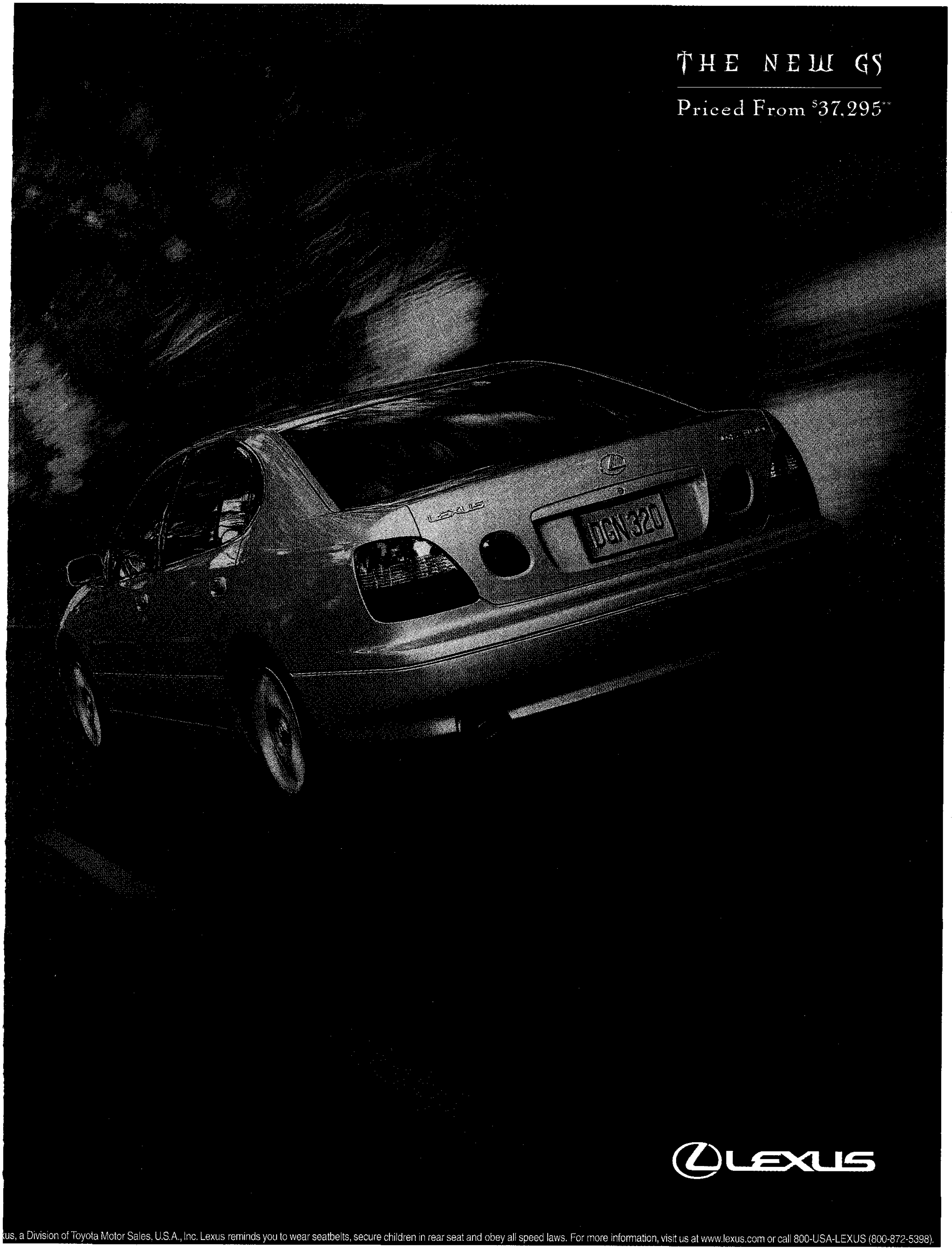
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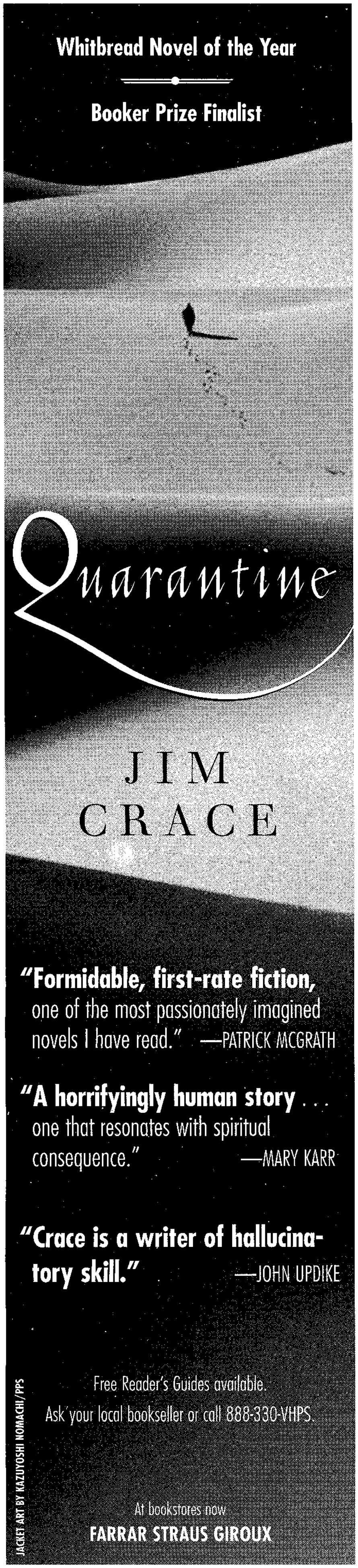

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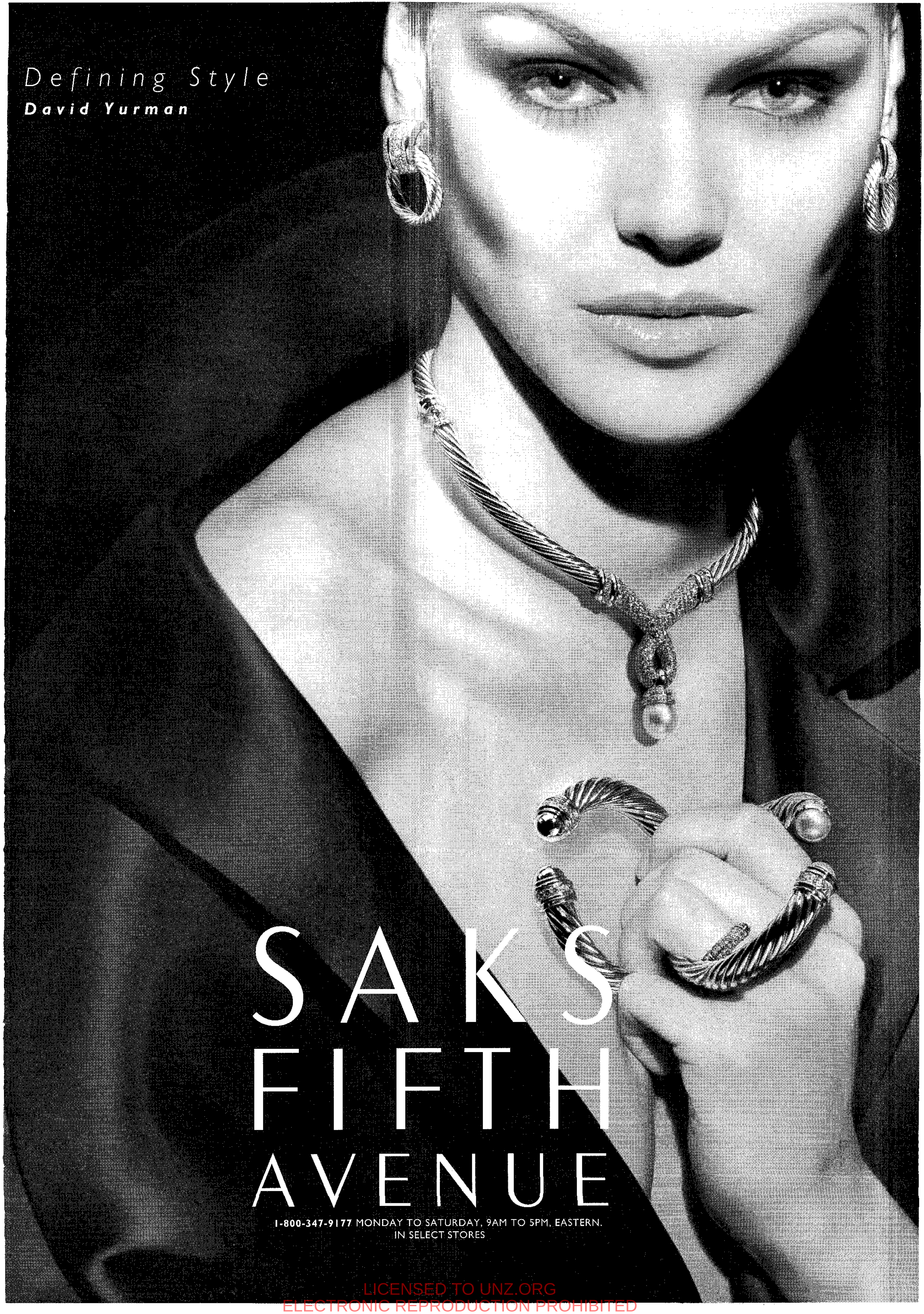

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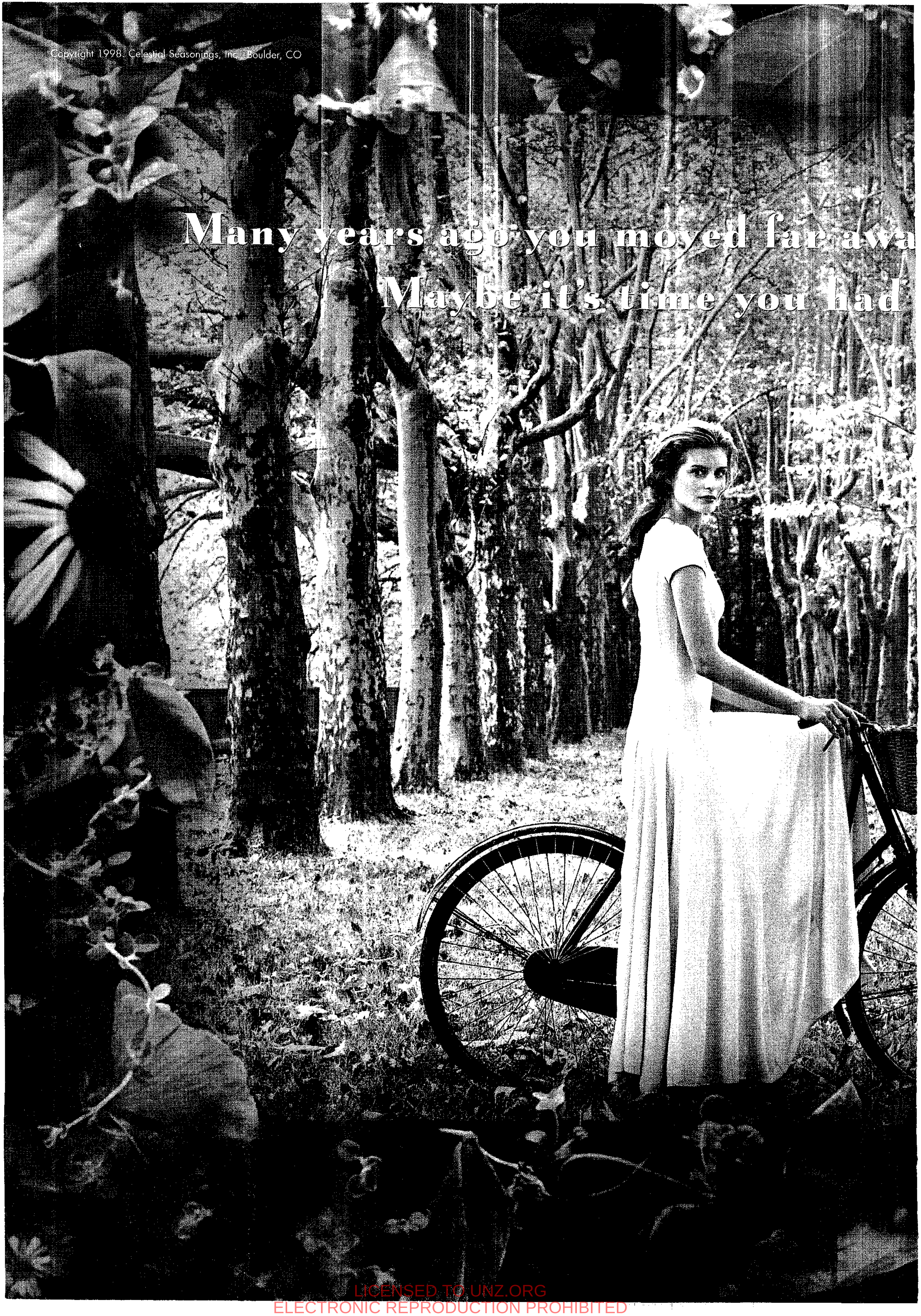
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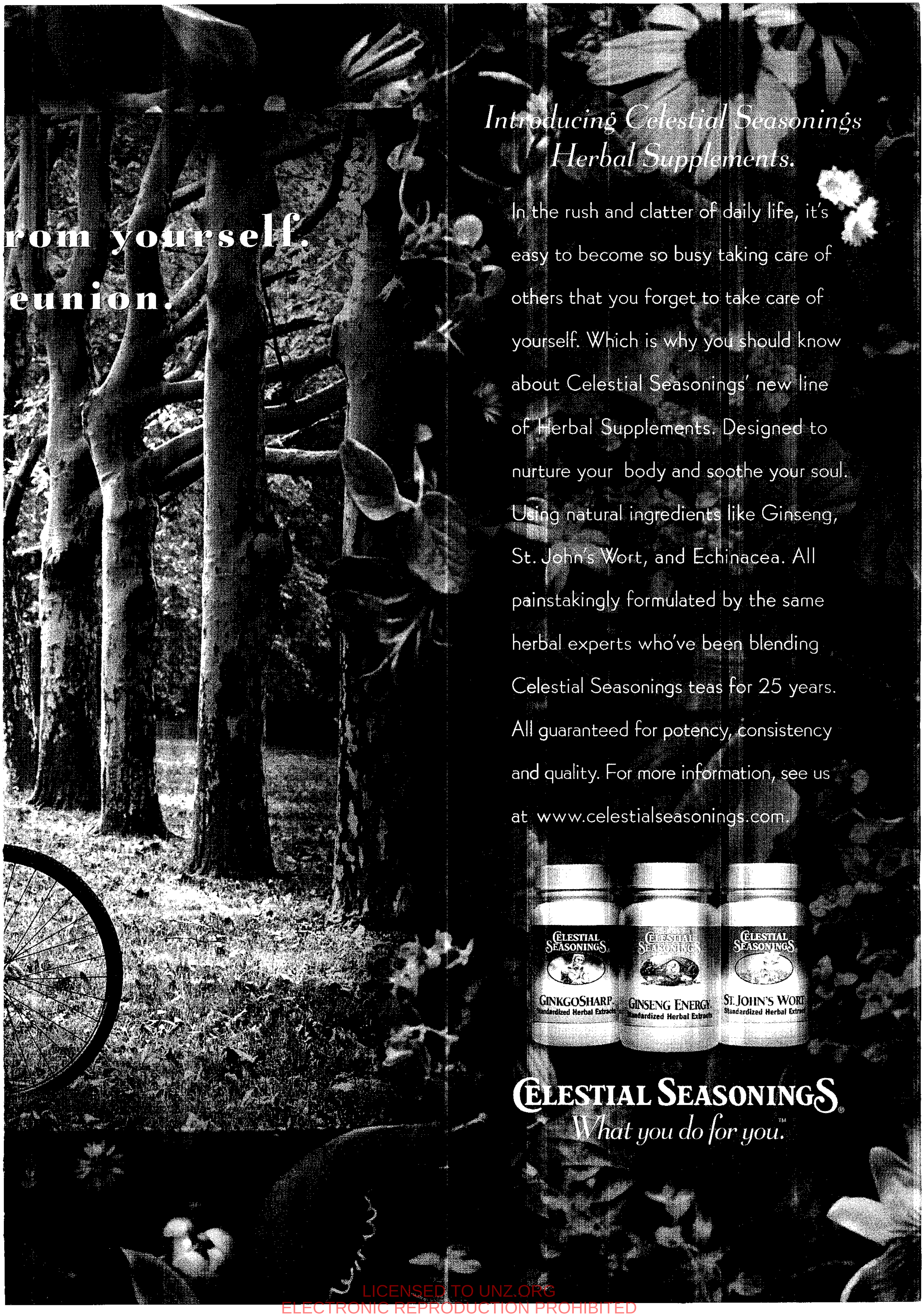
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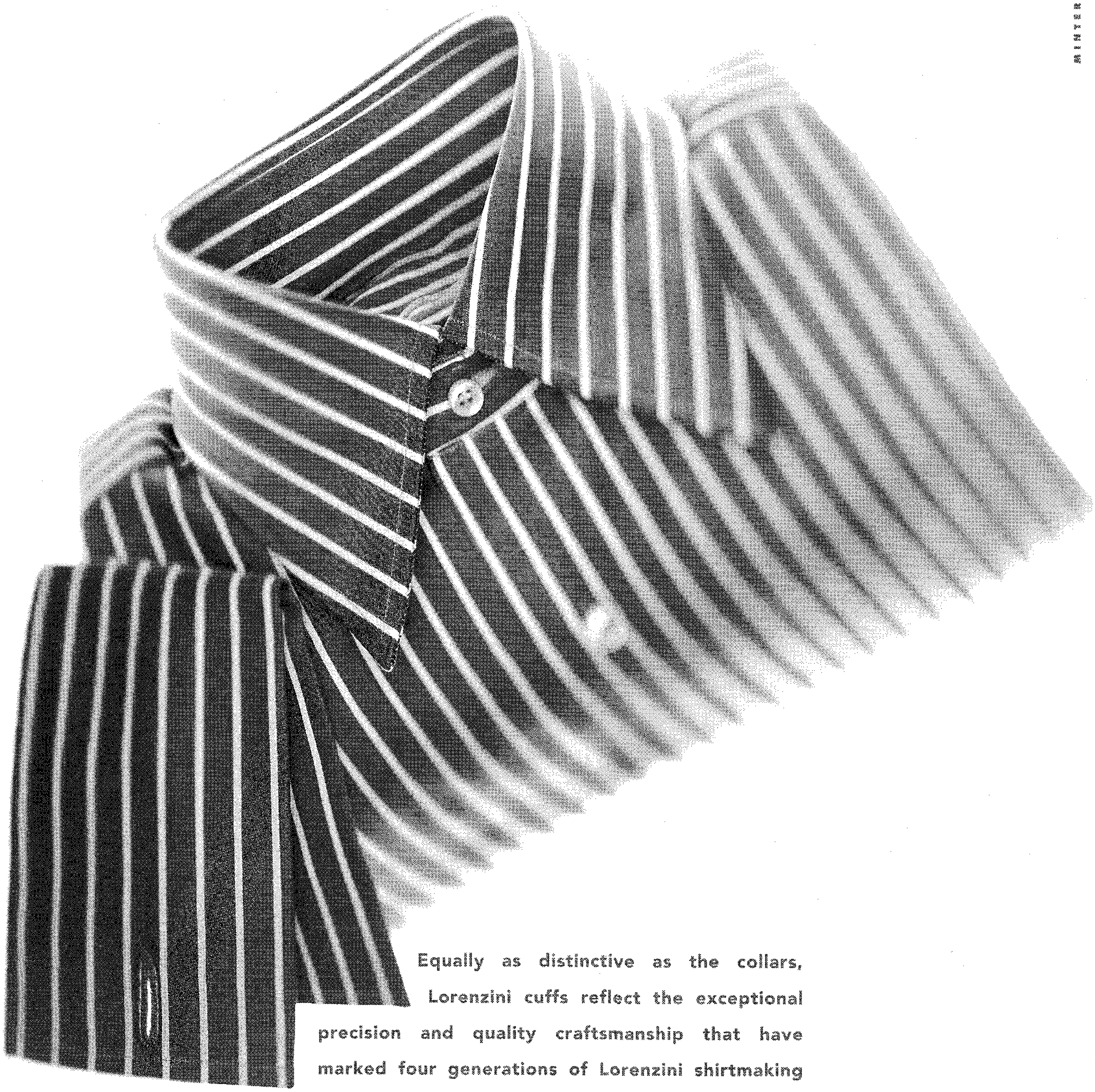

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COMMENT

TAP DANCE

The big, scary, hard-to-figure "American people."

"Your *People*, Sir, is nothing but a great Beast," Alexander Hamilton told Thomas Jefferson during one of their philosophical set-tos. If Hamilton were alive today—making his living as the star of a television political talk show, perhaps (with Jefferson as his "from the left, I'm" co-host)—his exasperation would put him right in tune with the rest of the Beltway crowd. That *People* of Jefferson's has been a most unaccountable animal of late. It believes that Bill Clinton is a fine President, and also that history will remember him more for scandal than for accomplishment; that his sex life is his private business, and also that he ought to come clean and tell the world all about it; that obstruction of justice is an impeachable offense, and also that he shouldn't be impeached over it; that he probably did most of the terrible things he is accused of doing, and also that his tormentors ought to quit pestering him about them.

Naturally, the commentating classes are vexed. The remarkable thing, though, is not that the public is capable of holding inconsistent opinions (who isn't?) but that it has so *many* opinions, and that so much time, money, and attention are devoted to measuring and interpreting them. There used to be something called the silent majority, but that was before the advent of weekly polls, overnight polls, Internet polls, and instant polls. Now the voice of the people is the voice that won't shut the hell up.

"The American people" are a faceless but omnipresent participant in every conversation about anything remotely political, from the Kenneth Starr investigation to Bosnia. It's all very well to know what experts think, and what seasoned observers think, and what White House sources think. But what "the American people" think trumps them all. "Don't give me law and don't give me facts," William Ginsburg, Monica Lewinsky's chaperon, said indignantly the other day, adding, "How about justice—and the will of the American people?" A good question, because "the American people" seem to offer what no one else can: legitimacy. If you agree with them, you have it. If you don't, you don't; your opinion is somehow illegitimate. You may even be—dread thought—out of the mainstream.

Washington talks a lot more obsessively about "the American people"—let's call the beast TAP to save ink—

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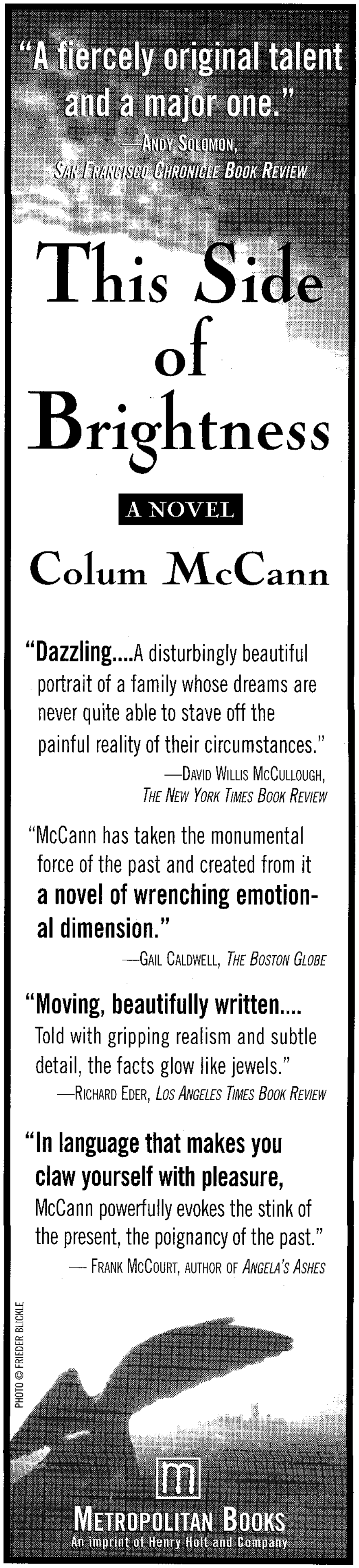

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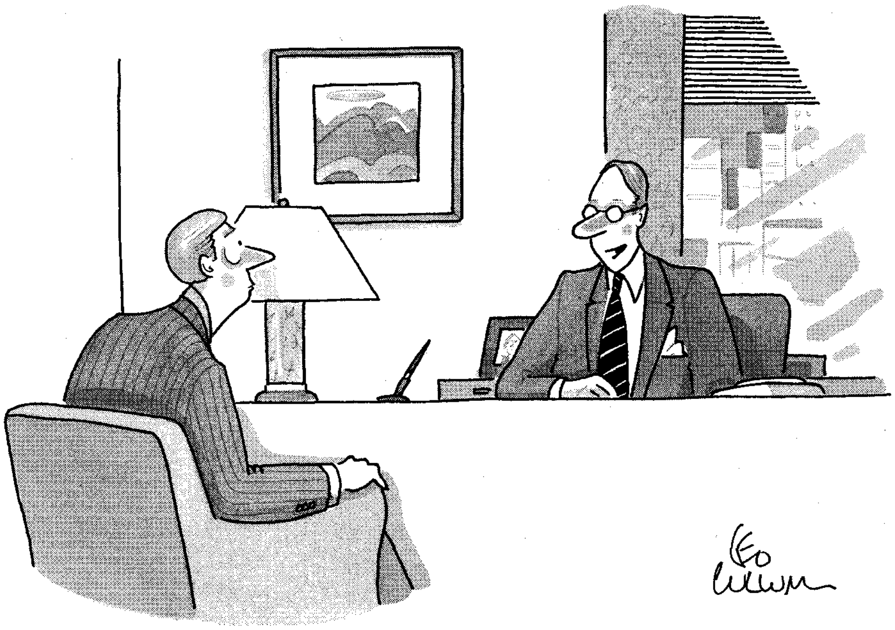

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than, say, Copenhagen talks about "the Danish people" or Madrid about "the Spanish people." One reason, perhaps, is that overweening power begets pompous diction, and it has been a long time since Danes or Spaniards could mistake themselves for leading players on the global stage. But another reason is that Denmark and Spain—and, for that matter, most of the other countries of the democratic world, from Poland to New Zealand—have national political institutions whose representational legitimacy is taken for granted. Most citizens vote in such countries, and (thanks to proportional seat allocation) almost everyone who votes gets to help elect a legislator he or she actually supports, so the government more or less mirrors the electorate. There's little need for taking the temperature of "the people" every five minutes, because the electoral thermometer works.

But who speaks for TAP? The House of Representatives? Not really. The House "represents" at best only about a quarter of the country's eligible voters: that's how many of us voted for one of its four hundred and thirty-five members. (And only about a fifth of that quarter, which is to say around five per cent of the total, ever gets to help elect someone in a competitive district, where the result isn't a foregone conclusion.) How about the President, then? The incumbent fell short of a majority of votes cast in 1996, and his plurality added up to about a quarter of the eligible electorate—by which measure, incidentally, no President in this century has been elected by a popular majority. The media? Lawyers? Pressure groups? Do they speak for TAP? Please.

No, TAP is left to speak for itself, through the murky medium of polls, with their often suspect methodologies, hidden agendas, and carelessly or tendentiously framed questions. The political and social institutions that might once have taken it upon themselves to speak for TAP no longer dare to do so; they lack self-confidence, a lack based on the perception that they have lost the confidence of TAP—as measured, of course, by polls. Politicians, commentators, and even judges all pledge fealty to TAP's wisdom, fear TAP's wrath, and feel safe only when they are reasonably sure of TAP's favor. Two or three years ago, it was conservatives who were smugly sure that they had a pipeline to TAP. For the moment, post-Paula Jones, it's the Clintonians' turn to gloat. But the beast is fickle. Better, perhaps, for those who seek its esteem to spend less time hastening to agree with what they think TAP thinks and more time deciding, and saying, what they themselves think—assuming, of course, that the faculty of thought has not wholly atrophied.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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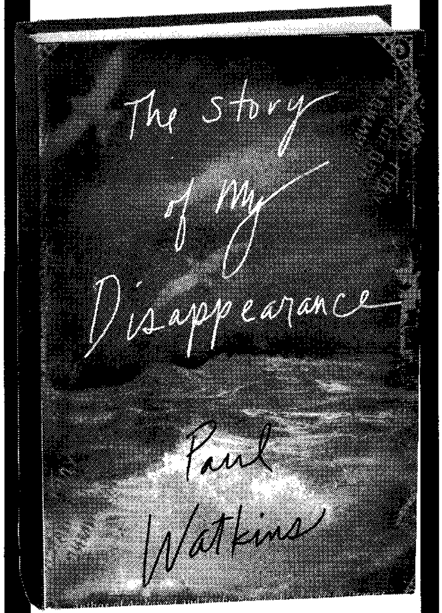

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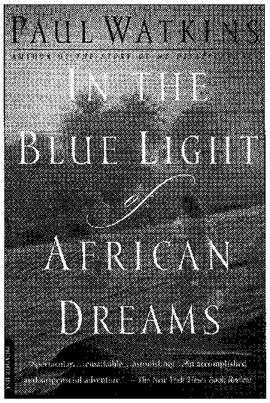

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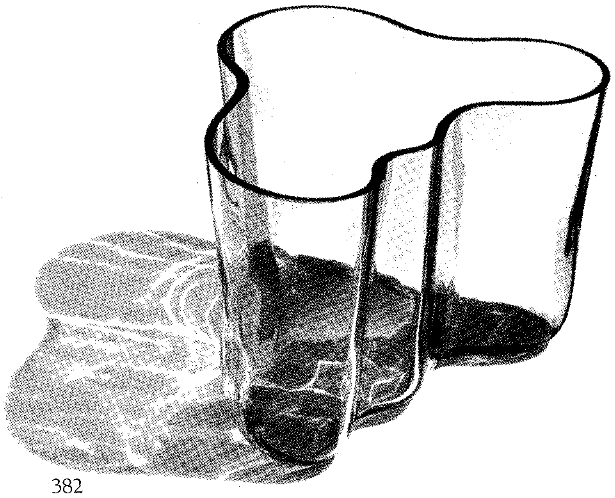
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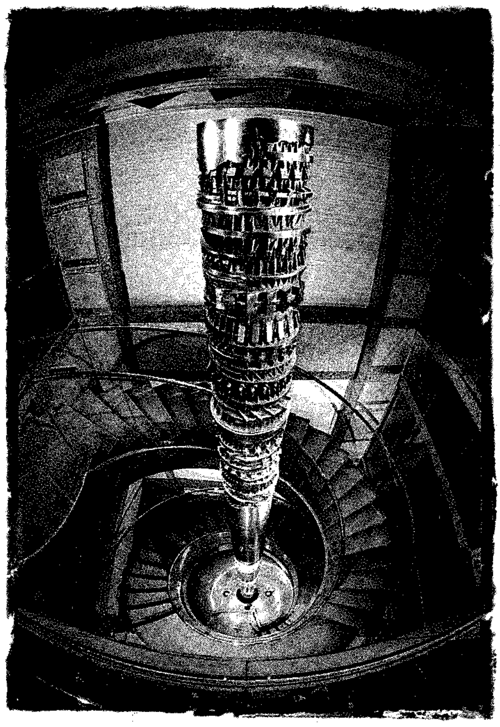
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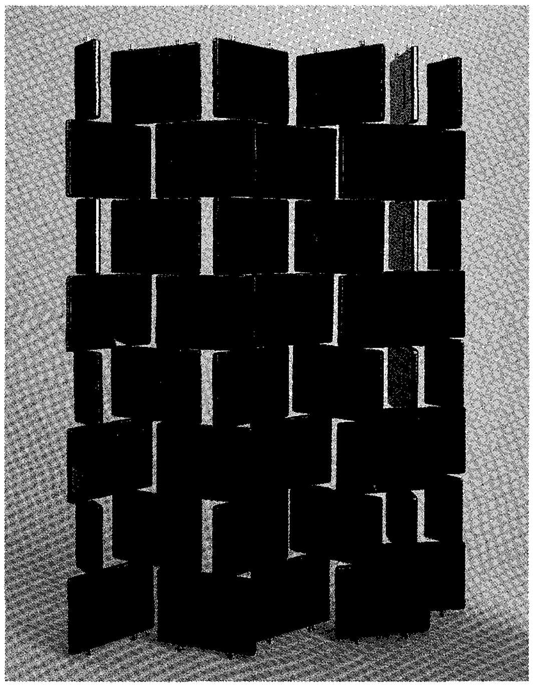
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382. Alvar Aalto. Vase. 1936. Amber cast crystal glass. 6¼" (16 cm) high. Made in Finland by Iittala. Gift of Artek-Pascoe, Inc.

383. Park Hyatt Hotel. Staircase. 1991. Dramatic 3-story tubular steel and glass stairway. Ascends to a 4-star grillroom that's heightened in altitude and culinary attitude. Spirals around a 31' cast-bronze sculpture that's banded in hand-carved hieroglyphic geometric reliefs. Grounded in a foundation of black river rock that's just a stone's throw away from an omniscient concierge whose sole purpose in life is to make your stay as perfectly eventful or uneventful as you desire. The Park Hyatt collection: Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Chicago (2000). Buenos Aires, Canberra, Johannesburg, London, Madrid, Sydney and Tokyo. (Reservations: 1 800 233 1234) The Park Hyatt. Classic. Modern. Luxury.

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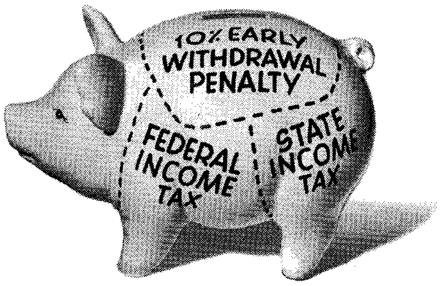

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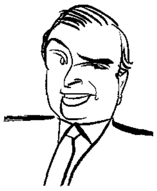

KEN AULETTA ("In the Company of Women," p. 72) is the media columnist for this magazine. His book "The Highwaymen: Warriors of the Information Superhighway," a collection of his *New Yorker* Profiles, will be out in paperback this May.

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THE MAIL

BACK-LOT BACKCHAT

I spoke with Tad Friend regarding his article "The Eighteen-Year Itch," which appeared in the issue of April 13th; unfortunately, I was too late for the deadline.

I've known Brad Grey for the past twenty years, and he is a man of integrity and honor. In fact, Brad was working for me when he signed Garry Shandling as a client. At that time, management was not an area that Miramax wanted to pursue. After an amicable parting, Brad formed his own management company, with a number of clients, including Garry and Bob Saget.

I watched Brad turn Garry Shandling and Bob Saget into superstars. Brad worked all day and all night, subsidizing their careers and providing inspiration every step of the way. Brad had unwavering loyalty and devotion to his clients.

Over the years, I lost touch with Garry, but my relationship with Brad continued. I was shocked, like everybody else, when Garry filed his lawsuit. What few in our industry seem to remember is the starting, starving stages of an artist's career, when a manager devotes everything he has to that client. These early moments define the difference between success for some and anonymity for most. When success is achieved, the hard work is sometimes appreciated; often it's forgotten.

The idea that Brad's career soared by his taking advantage of Garry is taking the opposite to the extreme! Brad always had the initiative and the desire to produce for television and the movies.

What the article left out was the result of Brad's joining forces with Bernie Brillstein. Bernie, who had been the C.E.O. of Lorimar, had long ago been a supplier of TV shows—"Hee Haw," "Saturday Night Live," "Alf," and "The Muppet Show," to name a few. He also served as executive producer, on "The Blues Brothers" and "Ghostbusters," and producer, on "Dangerous Liaisons."

When Brad joined the company that Bernie had founded, the passion Brad had for Garry, together with Bernie's clout in the industry, helped launch Garry's TV career. This is not to say that Garry isn't extremely talented, but it helps to have clout.

Brad went on to become Bernie's partner, and Brillstein-Grey Entertainment has had a stellar track record, producing such TV shows as "NewsRadio," "Just Shoot Me," and "Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher."

Recently, Garry called me, and we talked about the lawsuit. I told him I thought it was hurtful and wrong. I also sensed that Garry still had good feelings about Brad. In a sober moment, Garry seemed to have his own regrets about filing the suit. At the end of the conversation, I wished Garry luck and, kidding, I asked for a role on "The Larry Sanders Show." His response was "Only if you play yourself."

HARVEY WEINSTEIN
Co-Chairman, Miramax Films
New York City

CLINTON, STEADFAST

Hendrik Hertzberg's article about Hollywood's depictions of politicians (A Critic at Large, March 23rd) may prove the triumph of the politics of the new ("Primary Colors") over nineteen-thirties Hollywood populism ("Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"). The explanation for that triumph, however, is not found in Joe Klein's or Mike Nichols's work, but in the work of the German sociologist Max Weber, who, in his classic essay "Politics as a Vocation," wrote of politicians, "And even those who are neither leaders nor heroes must arm themselves with that steadfastness of heart which can brave even the crumbling of all hopes."

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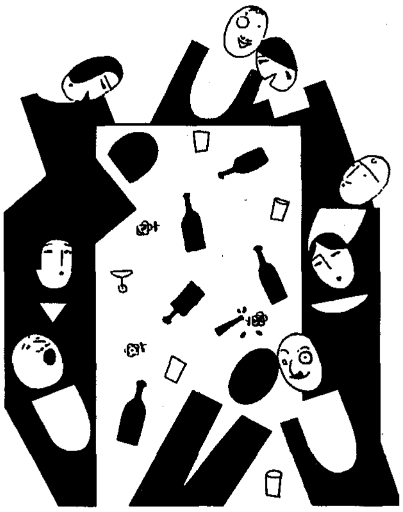
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			15	16	17	18
19	20	21				

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bad Sex with Bud Kemp—A one-woman show about single life in New York, written and performed by Sandra Tsing Loh. In previews through April 20. Opens April 21 at 8. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392.)

Call Me Madam—The Village Light Opera Group presents a revival of the 1950 Irving Berlin musical. April 18 at 8 and April 19 at 2. Continues through April 26. (Haft Auditorium, 227 W. 27th St. 279-4200.)

From Above—In Tom Donaghy's new play, a young woman in mourning is visited by a man who claims to be her dead husband. David Warren is the director. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Herbal Bed—Shakespeare's daughter is put on trial for adultery, in a drama by Peter Whelan. Michael Attenborough is the director. Two previews on April 15. Opens April 16 at 6:30. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

High Society—A new musical based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story." With songs by Cole Porter and a book by Arthur Kopit. Christopher Renshaw is the director. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—The life of a middle-aged poet (Jane Alexander) is turned upside down when a young journalist (Laura Linney) arrives to interview her writer husband (Robert Foxworth), in a drama by the Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Miss Julie—Strindberg's tragedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's final production for the season. In previews through April 19. Opens April 20 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Power Plays—Three one-act comedies written by and starring Elaine May and Alan Arkin, who are joined by Anthony Arkin and Jeannie Berlin. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Too Jewish Two—Avi Hoffman's salute to the original Borscht Belt comics, a sequel to "Too Jewish?" In previews. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Ah, Wilderness!—A Lincoln Center Theatre revival of Eugene O'Neill's comedy, set on Independence Day in 1906. (Vivian Beaumont. 239-6200.)

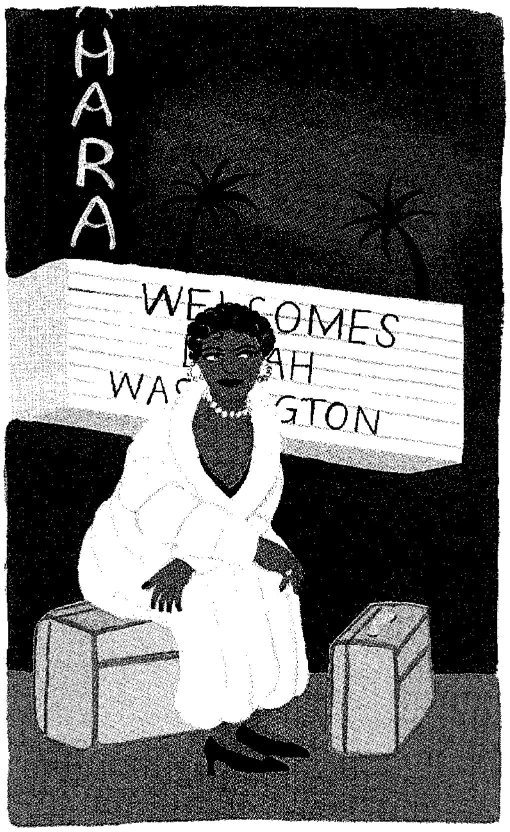
Amazing Grace—In this new drama by Michael Cristofer, Marsha Mason is eerily believable as an oblivious murderess who finds God on death row in North Carolina. What's hard to believe is that Cristofer thought it might be fresh to reheat the old Southern sinner-salvation-faith-healing-crucifixion stew that's so often served up in death-penalty dramas. The talented cast makes do. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

Anadarko—The MCC Theatre presents a drama set in an Oklahoma jail, by Tim Blake Nelson. Doug Hughes is the director. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes April 18.)

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Elegantly translated, from the French, by Christopher Hampton. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother (the stolid and sensational Anna Manahan) and her virgin forty-year-old daughter (the pale and poignant Marie Mullen), who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Cabaret—This mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical doesn't have the high-gloss veneer of the celebrated movie version; here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized, and go through their paces in torn stockings. As the Emcee (the Joel Grey role), Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, the role that made Liza Minnelli a star, casts a spectral glow. Everything in this show, the brainchild of the director Sam Mendes, seems to ask the audience to what extent we are participating in—perhaps collaborating in—the events unfolding before our eyes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)



Yvette Freeman, in "Dinah Was."

CLAUDIA PEARSON

The Chairs—The British troupe Théâtre de Complicité's staging of Ionesco's one-act tragic farce—in which two nonagenarians (played by the English comic veterans Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan) act out the folly and fierce solitude of their dwindling days—has established finally and forever the indubitable poetry and genius of the play, written nearly half a century ago. Superbly directed by Simon McBurney, the production is also aided by the Quay Brothers' splendid water-stained gray-plank set, which gives Ionesco's ontological void the shape of a floating, threadbare island world on the edge of nothingness. (4/13/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Cripple of Inishmaan—Martin McDonagh's bittersweet comedy is probably his best play so far, but you'd never know it from Jerry Zaks's heavy-handed, drab production, which has drained all sense of place, fun, and character from the script. (The sets, costumes, and casting are generic; so is the direction.) Despite a stellar performance by Ruaidhri Conroy, who starred in the original National Theatre version, the show lies there like a lump of soda bread that didn't rise. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

The Deep Blue Sea—Blythe Danner and Edward Herrmann star in a revival of Terence Rattigan's 1952 drama. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett is an improvement, and the cast is fine. But the play's realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really re-create for ourselves what Anne's dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman) trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. Directed by David Petrarca. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes April 26.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes May 3.)

The Emperor Jones—The Wooster Group's staging of O'Neill's early drama. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes April 26.)

A Flea in Her Ear—Bill Irwin's production of Georges Feydeau's 1907 farce can't live up to the fun of the script, which has been deftly and wittily co-adapted by Jean-Marie Besset and Mark O'Donnell. Part of the problem is the casting: the ensemble is quite young, and as a group the actors lack both the years and the swank necessary to carry off the vainglory for which the author punishes them. (3/23/98) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane,

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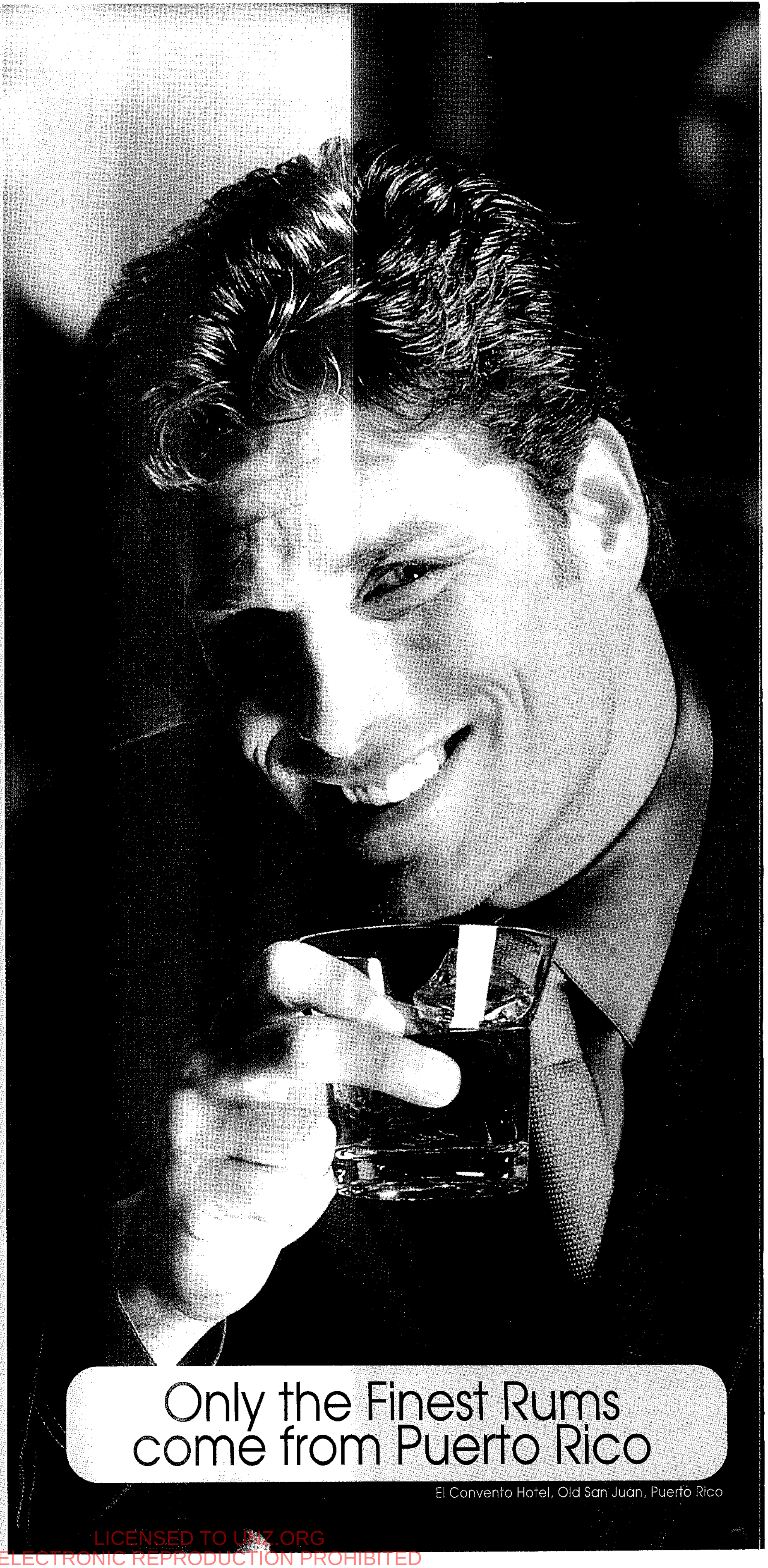


Only the Finest Rums come from Puerto Rico

El Convento Hotel, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico beginning with the moment his parents conceived him, in Colombia. ("We left during that great plantain famine of the late sixties," he says.) He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Golden Child—A graceful, affecting production of David Henry Hwang's 1996 drama. Set in both present-day Manhattan and in China in 1918, the play traces the impact of Christianity and Western ideas on one Chinese family over several generations while also exploring themes of individuality, assimilation, and cultural evolution. Hwang treats it all with wit and humor, so the evening is never heavy handed. The cast, under the direction of James Lapine, is quite good, and the sets and costumes are simple and lovely. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

Hot Klezmer—A celebration of wedding music of the shtetl. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes May 3.)

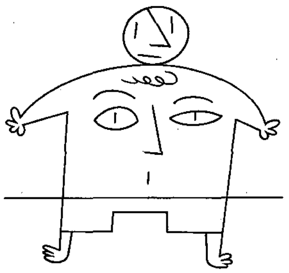
I Am My Own Cheap Thrill—It's a man's world, and Amanda Vogel has something to say about it in her one-woman show. Thursdays through Saturdays at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch's new one-man show is a series of short monologues by characters concerned with at least one of the above. Mr. Hoch's versatility is astonishing, and at its best the show is a smart, perceptive, and very funny look into the marginal worlds of his characters. But some segments fall flat and others go on too long; on the whole, the evening should have been honed to a finer edge. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes April 18.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Lion King—The director Julie Taymor's theatrical event is far more textured and original than the animated film; it's like being in a dream awake. The show's high visual style, however, is in sharp contrast to its low verbal one. (11/24/97) (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night—An Irish Rep staging of O'Neill's drama. With Frances Sternhagen and Brian Murray. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes May 3.)



J.D. KING

Marc Salem's Mindgames—The clairvoyant's fascinating "tricks" seem like magic, and at times you feel like you're the only person in the audience who isn't a plant. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Mizlansky/Zilinsky; or, Schmucks—Davis Mizlansky, played with terrific gusto by Nathan Lane, is a has-been producer trying to float one last get-rich scheme—the sale of a dubious tax shelter—with his urbane partner and erstwhile best friend, Sam Zilinsky (the droll Lewis J. Stadlen), whom he woos, hilariously, into the disastrous scam. Jon Robin Baitz based this high-spirited comedy on his experiences working as a gofer for a two-bit producer in the mid-eighties. Aided by Joe Mantello's elegant direction, he creates a potent atmosphere of affection and regret which is the play's charm. (3/16/98) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 26.)

Mystery School—Tyne Daly stars in Paul Selig's new one-woman play, a collection of monologues by five characters in various states of spiritual fulfillment. Though the idea has the potential to be deadly earnest, the show is, for the most part, funny and thought-provoking. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

Never the Sinner—John Logan's 1985 play about Leopold and Loeb, the teen-age millionaires who murdered a child in Chicago in 1924, sweeps the audience into the boys' twisted friendship without losing sight of the sheer brutality of their "crime of the century"—a balancing act that Mr. Logan and the director, Ethan McSweeny, bring off seamlessly. Jason Patrick Bowcutt and Michael Solomon are utterly convincing as the killers. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Old Neighborhood—David Mamet's three elegant, autobiographical one-act plays are serious, beautiful, and short—an almost impossible feat these days on Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Paul McKenna's Hypnotic World—The British-television mesmerizer, on Broadway. Sundays and Mondays through April 20. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

The Physicists—The Swiss dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt's 1962 comedy gets an update by the Company Presents. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 636-9348.)

Quidam—A new show from Cirque du Soleil. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

St. Nicholas—Brian Cox portrays a drama critic describing a breakdown of sorts, in Conor McPherson's cheeky 1997 play. Perhaps it's because of Cox's powerful performance that you don't quite notice how truly bizarre his story becomes—one minute he's a boozy, self-loathing hack who spends his evenings writing his reviews before the plays are over while lusting for beautiful actresses; the next, he's spending them shepherding attractive young victims to a grouchy vampire named William—and perhaps it's because the story is not really such a stretch. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes April 25.)

Santa Concepción—The Public Theatre's first offering in its First Stages series of plays in progress is Anne García-Romero's comedy about a young woman who prays to give birth as a virgin. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

Saturn Returns: A Concert—Adam Guettel's dashing abilities as both composer and lyricist are sounded from the first beat of his song cycle, which offers a tempting glimpse of a major talent to look forward to. The evening, a kind of musical grab bag, is ostensibly based on Greek myths and Protestant hymns, but it is actually a scintillating piece of musical autobiography that explores Guettel's fractured sense of self. Astutely directed by Tina Landau. (4/13/98) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes April 26.)

The Scarlet Pimpernel—This musical has a lot going for it (if you don't count the music and lyrics, which are dreadful): its charismatic star, Douglas Sills, Andrew Jackness's sets, and Jane Greenwood's costumes. Peter Hunt directed. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

The Sound of Music—The Rodgers and Hammerstein favorite is back, in live, non-VHS form. Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful. The one piece of unfortunate casting is Michael Siberry, who makes a lightweight, antimagnetic Georg von Trapp. This musical has the inexorable pull of a fairy tale: children are riveted by it, and adults may find themselves weeping whether they like it or not. Still, the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. Susan H. Schulman is the director. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Summer in Gossensass—Maria Irene Fornés's new drama, about two actresses responsible for the first London staging of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler." (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 26.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians, starring Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. The sandpapery friction that the twosome showed on TV is now reduced to lovability. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Two Pianos, Four Hands—With the Canadian keyboardists Ted Dykstra and Richard Greenblatt. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

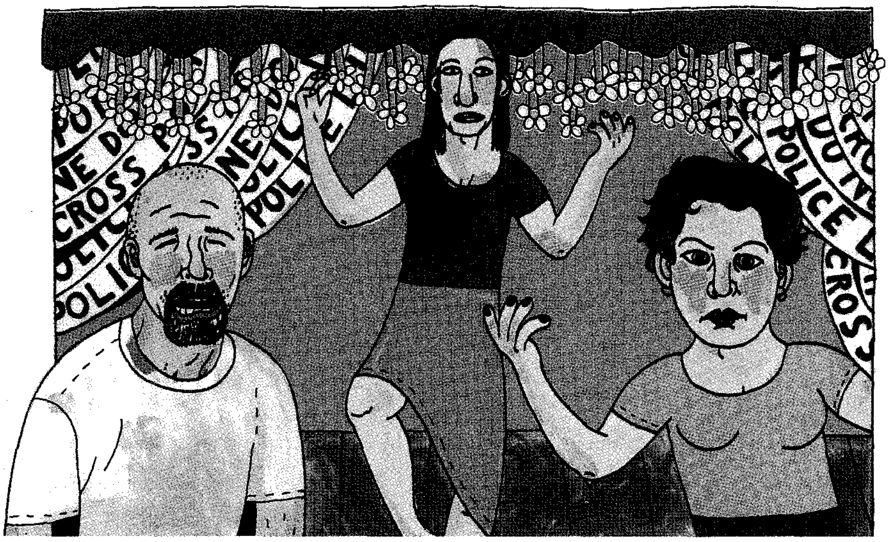
LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE:** Century, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **1776:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** LuntFontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.

DANCE

Universal Ballet of Korea—The Seoul-based company makes its New York début with two full-length works, "Shim-Chung, the Blindman's Daughter," based on the Korean folk tale, and "Swan Lake." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 14-17 at 8, April 18 at 2 and 8, and April 19 at 3.)

Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech—April 15 and April 18 at 8: "Umbra Rumba," "The Last Sonata," "Yo, Shakespeare," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ April 16-17 and April 21 at 8: "Doo Dah Day," "Echo," "Yo, Johann," and "Paper Tiger." . . . ¶ April 18 at 2 (a family matinée): "Hello Fancy," "Half Time," "Evening Chant," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ April 19 at 2 (a family matinée): "Sleep Study," "23 Skidoo," "Joggers," and "Meshugana Dance." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 26.)



Marc Kenison, Chrysa Parkinson, and Sarah Perron, in Tere O'Connor's "The World Is a Missing Girl," at Dance Theatre Workshop.

MARK TODD

Tere O'Connor Dance—When asked about the irony of his choreography, Tere O'Connor says, "I developed a language for heterosexuals, and that was the spoken language. And then I developed this other language, dance, that was sophisticated and off to the side here." But ever since "Notes on Shame" (1995), in which O'Connor had three dancers slowly mouthing a wordless, painfully slow (and hilarious) background song, O'Connor's separate languages have started to join forces and comment on each other. In his new work, "The World Is a Missing Girl," the two styles constantly interact, as the performers (O'Connor calls them "actors" and "dancers" interchangeably) keep breaking out of character to address the audience. "They're proud of the show they're putting on," O'Connor laughs. As they should be. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 16-18 at 8 and April 19 at 3. Through May 3.)

"Coming from Quiet"—Victoria Anderson, Pamela Cohen, Aislinn MacMaster, and Marta Miller perform an evening-length quartet choreographed by Gina Gibney. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 16-19 at 8:30.)

"Baseball"—In a rare collaboration, Momix—at the behest of the New York Mets—reprises its gymnastic homage to the national pastime, with lively ballpark figures dressed in leotards. (Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows–Corona Park. 718-760-0064. April 18 at 8 and April 19 at 3.)

Ballet Builders—The eighth annual program, chosen by New Choreographers on Point, includes such works as "Salve Regina," by Stephen Mills, and "Duo Danza," by Susan Manchak. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. April 17-18 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Dave Douglas—No wonder Douglas is the downtown trumpeter of choice. He's got the requisite open-vista imagination and eclecticism, but old-fashioned panache is his real edge. A conservative streak accounts for his sparkling sound and for the strong compositions that have made his recent recordings so memorable. With a new ensemble, he'll perform "Thoughts Around Mahfouz," an evening of new works inspired by the writings of the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian novelist. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. April 15 at 9.)

Funk Music Festival—Featuring longtime James Brown hornman Maceo Parker and the punk-infused ska of Fishbone. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 16 at 7:30.)

Mehr and Sher Ali—The vocalists, in a program of the Sufi devotional music known as *qawwali.* (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. April 16 and April 18 at 8 and April 19 at 7.)

John Renbourn and Robin Williamson—The former is a master picker who blends folk, blues, Elizabethan airs, and jazz; the latter, a harpist who explores the mysteries of Celtic music. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 17 at 8.)

Radiohead / Spiritualized—On last year's "OK Computer," Thom Yorke and his five-piece combo from Oxford created a challenging and dazzlingly original pop kaleidoscope, part art rock, part grunge, part sunny-day psychedelia—it was one of the year's best records. The band's live shows are conversion experiences. / Spiritualized, one of the best English bands you've never heard of, specializes in neo-psychedelic dream pop. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. April 17-18 at 8.)

Johnny Mathis—The always mellow crooner, performing in the round. (Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. April 17-18 at 8 and April 19 at 7.)

Eric Clapton—This classic-rock demigod might now be called Slow Oldhand. On his latest album, "Pilgrim," Clapton turns in a blues-drenched reading that's as soporific as it is well intentioned. He'll be accompanied here by a full orchestra. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. April 18-20 at 8.)

"Influences: Charles Mingus"—An evening of Mingus compositions and other works influenced by the master, featuring tuba player Howard Johnson and saxophonist Pete Yellin. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 18 at 8:30.)

Erykah Badu—The big pop-music success story of 1997, Badu distinguished herself from the hordes of computer-driven R. & B. divas with a percolating, low-key hit single, "On & On." Her full-length record "Baduizm" showcases her self-defining brand of wacky New Age spirituality tinged with sex-kitten languor. (Radio City Music Hall. April 20-21 at 8.)

Borah Bergman and Oliver Lake—The boundary-pushing saxophonist Lake—a member in good standing of the World Saxophone Quartet—has covered the map, from avant-garde expressionism to warped jazz-reggae; this one-on-one encounter with the fearless pianist Bergman, while showcasing each player's technical prowess, will undoubtedly approach the outer reaches of improvisation. (Roulette. April 21 at 9.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—On April 17, **ED PALERMO** and his big band play the music of Frank Zappa. April 18: **BUSTER POINDEXTER AND HIS SPANISH ROCKETSHIP BAND.** April 20: Singer-songwriter **KYLE DAVIS** appears with some friends, among them producer and multi-instrumentalist **DON DIXON** and singer-guitarist **PETER HOLSAPPLE.** April 21: **"MONSTERS OF FOLK"** features the influential cowboy troubadour **"RAMBLIN' JACK" ELLIOTT,** Blasters co-founder **DAVE ALVIN, TOM RUSSELL,** and **CHRIS SMITHER.**

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—The veteran outfit **ROOMFUL OF BLUES** comes in April 17-18.

Eighty Eight's, 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—April 17: Former disco diva **VICKI SUE ROBINSON** turns the beat around.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 15: **JOE MC GINTY'S LOSER'S LOUNGE** deconstructs the music of Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazelwood—an exercise that may or may not be on your list of cultural imperatives. April 19: The **SUN RA ARKESTRA.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 16-18: In a perfect world, all putatively great bar bands would live up to their hype as gamely as the **RADIATORS** do. Shored up by Ed Volker's hearty singing and boogie-driven keyboard riffs, this New Orleans-based group delivers its bluesy rock with all the radiant gusto you could ask for. April 20: The **SPECIALS.** With that frenetic blend of punk and reggae known as English ska enjoying a revival, it's time to reacquaint yourself with these legends, who are touring to support their raucous new disk, "Guilty 'Til Proved Innocent."

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 18: **UPPER EXTREMITIES,** a session man's supergroup, consisting of former Yes and King Crimson drummer **BILL BRUFORD,** Peter Gabriel and Crimson bassist **TONY LEVIN,** Paul Simon trumpeter **CHRIS BOTTI,** and experimental guitarist **DAVID TORN.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 16: **LLOYD COLE'S NEGATIVES,** fronted by the dark, glowering, frequently brilliant Scottish singer. April 17: When **JOHN WESLEY HARDING** burst onto the scene in the late eighties, he raised quite a few eyebrows—for all the wrong reasons: a stage name taken from an old Dylan album and a style lifted straight from the pen and larynx of Elvis Costello. But the news is getting better: on "John Wesley Harding's New Deal" (1996), he displayed more inspiration than derivation, and on the new "Awake," he's hitting his stride. With former Dream Syndicate front man and post-punk auteur **STEVE WYNN** and Elysian Fields guitarist **OREN BLOEDOW.** April 18: The postmodern folk of **JOSEPH ARTHUR,** a recent addition to Peter Gabriel's Real World label.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—April 16: Percussionist **CYRO BAPTISTA** performs with his ten-piece outfit, **BEAT THE DONKEY.** April 17: Vibraphonist **ROY AYERS** is enjoying a mid-career resurgence owing to that most contemporary of sources, sampling. The funky jazz recordings he churned out in the seventies are now being plundered by hip-hop artists in search of old-school grooves. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 16: **STEVE MORSE** is best known as the ur-guitarist for the defunct country-fusion band Dixie Dregs (né the Dregs), which was a great vehicle for his awesome, if occasionally pointless, technique. April 17-18: Two nights of "super" stars: On April 17, the shrapnel-laden assault of **SUPERCHUNK,** with **VERSUS,** a topnotch combo with a gift for Sonic Youth-style droning. On April 18, the crashing bumper-car stylings of **SUPERDRAG,** with **APPLES IN STEREO,** a fun pop combo from Denver, and **TUSCADERO,** an irresistible bubblegum outfit from Washington, D.C. April 19: The Italian-and-Japanese avant pop of **BLONDE REDHEAD.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The **HOLLY HOFMANN ALL-STAR QUARTET** is in April 15-18. Hofmann, an outstanding flutist, hasn't yet reached the luminary status of some of her own band members—particularly the majestic **RAY BROWN,** whose monumental bass tone can shake the walls. Sundays belong to the **CHICO O'FARRILL AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA;** Mondays to the **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA;** and Tuesdays to the **DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA.** Dining.

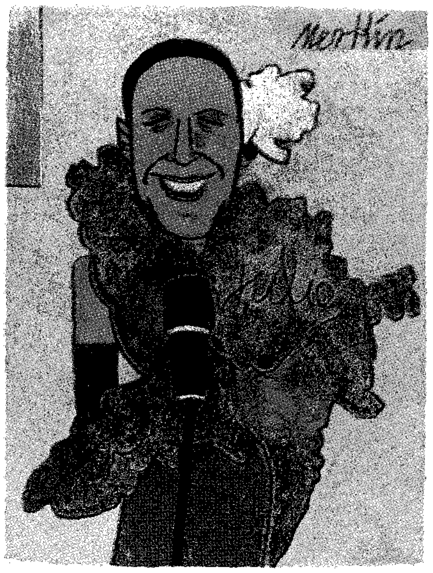
Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 19: At seventy-five, **VON FREEMAN** might be jazz's most adventurous tenor saxophonist. This sly radical, who is based in Chicago, has spent a lifetime learning and then breaking every rule: conventional conceptions of tone, rhythm, and harmony don't mean a thing to him. When he and his son **CHICO** (himself an exceptional tenorist) get together, it's not uncommon for the father to come off as an avant-garde eccentric and the son as a well-mannered conservative. Age and temperament notwithstanding, a more propitious matchup of creativity and swing can't be found. With vocalist **DIANNE REEVES.** April 20: **LIONEL HAMPTON'S 90TH-BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION.** Hampton, one of the grandest and oldest of jazz's grand old men, introduced the vibraphone to jazz at a Louis Armstrong session in 1931, and then proceeded to codify its use in Benny Goodman's historic small groups and in his own hard-driving ensembles. Hampton may no longer be the never-say-die rabble-rouser of yore, but he's still an unstoppable showman. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—As always, **BARBARA COOK'S** annual April engagement heralds the true start of spring. . . . ¶ On Mondays, **WOODY ALLEN** plays with the **EDDY DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 19: Pianist **LES MC CANN** and the **MAGIC BAND.** Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—April 16-18: **CONRAD HERWIG AND TROPICAL FIRE.** Herwig is one of those fierce trombonists who can be found working both sides of the jazz-Latin fence. His bands meld Latin rhythmic multiplicity with the modern modalism of Coltrane and his ilk.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—April 15-18: Tapping into the wellspring of Tyner, Hancock, and Evans, pianist **JOANNE BRACKEEN** has fashioned her own engaging and personal sound. Everything she touches, from American standards and Brazilian lilts to her own post-bop pieces, rings with assuredness. Like an old married couple, Brackeen and her longtime colleague, the revered bassist **CECIL MC BEE,** seem to complete each other's (musical) sentences.



Chanteuse Julie Wilson, at Michael's Pub at Bill's Gay Nineties.

RICHARD MERKIN

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 15: An evening of Brazilian sounds, with guitarist **VINICIUS CANTUARIA** and percussionist **NANA VASCONCELOS.** April 18: Saxophonist **JOE MANERI** was stretching the tonal and metric conventions of jazz way back in the early sixties; for proof, there's "Panitos Nine," a new selection of his unreleased work from that era. Maneri is still stretching, but now his son **MATT,** a violinist, is assisting in the proceedings, and people are relishing the deviant results. April 19: **METROPOLITAN KLEZMER** plays songs from its new album, "Yiddish for Travelers."

Michael's Pub at Bill's Gay Nineties, 57 E. 54th St. (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON,** the doyenne of New York chanteuses, has decided to settle in for an open-ended residence at this upstairs club room. For the time being, she's crafting her show as a tribute to the legendary showman Florenz Ziegfeld.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Singer and raconteur **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN** is in through April 25.

Red Blazer, 32 W. 37th St. (262-3112)—April 21: For the past four decades clarinettist **KENNY DAVERN** has tapped into the spirits of such licorice-stick iconoclasts as Pee Wee Russell by tempering a quirky individualism with sterling technique. Davern is accompanied by **JOHN BUNCH** (piano) and **TONY DE NICOLA** (drums).

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—At its peak in the mid-eighties, the coöperative band **SPHERE** (through April 19) performed seamlessly, like a dream. Pianist Kenny Barron, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Ben Riley played with grace and nuance—as if the very survival of those jazz qualities were at stake. Sphere disbanded when Rouse died, in 1988, but this reunion holds much promise. In a wise move, Rouse's spot has been offered to an alto saxophonist, the incomparable Gary Bartz. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through April 18: Amiable, dependable, sleek—pianist **JOHN BUNCH,** guitarist **BUCKY PIZZARELLI,** and bassist **JAY LEONHART** aren't in the business of ruffling feathers. What they do best is weave a carpet of gently intoxicating swing. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"American Ingenuity," at the Costume Institute, pays tribute to the pioneer women of sportswear—Claire McCardell, Bonnie Cashin, Anne Klein, Vera Maxwell, and Elizabeth Hawes—who gave American ingénues their look of dressy nonchalance. Through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor." Through May 24. . . . ¶ "Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823)." Through June 7. . . . ¶ "When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles in the Metropolitan and Cleveland Museums of Art." Through May 17. . . . ¶ "Paul Strand Circa 1916." Through May 31. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The Chuck Close retrospective and "Artists and Subjects: Picasso to Stella" examine the guises of twentieth-century portraiture. Through May 26 and May 25, respectively. . . . ¶ "Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism," a centennial exhibition that includes sketches, photographs, and maquettes of architectural projects by the Finnish modernist. Through May 19. . . . ¶ A retrospective of the works of Fernand Léger follows the metamorphoses of the French painter (1881-1955), from Fauvist to Cubist to Social Realist. Through May 12. . . . ¶ "The Clutter of Happenstance: Photographs by Robert Cumming." Through June 23. . . . ¶ Twenty-six recently acquired photographs by Garry Winogrand are on view. Through May 31. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"China: 5,000 Years" is an impressive survey of art in nearly every medium; it includes some of the country's greatest masterpieces. The exhibition ranges from the Neolithic to the dynastic era and has no particular focus; with works of this quality, however, no one's complaining. Through June 3. . . . ¶ "After 'Mountains and Sea': Frankenthaler 1956-59." Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series." Through May 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"A Century in Crisis" comprises the contemporary portion of the institution's blockbuster exhibition "China: 5,000 Years." Through May 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The current Bill Viola retrospective is quite a feat of installation, incorporating sound and image in complex, quasi-sculptural settings. Through May 10. . . . ¶ The face-lift for the museum's permanent-collection galleries is now complete, with the expanded quarters serving as the new home for key works by Hopper, O'Keeffe, and Calder. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" presents crown jewels and other baubles, including the most famous sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Still More Distant Journeys: The Artistic Emigrations of Lasar Segall (1891-

1957)" is the first United States retrospective of the German Expressionist and Brazilian modernist, whose evolving styles kept pace with his migrations from Vilnius, Berlin, and Dresden to, finally, São Paulo. Through May 10. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway (966-1313)—"African Faces, African Figures" is a well-mounted exhibition of the collection of the French sculptor Armand P. Arman, who made his name in the sixties with obsessive accumulations of everyday objects, piled up in vitrines. There are some impressive piles on display here, too: twenty-six smoothly carved wooden masks from the Mende people of Sierra Leone; Congolese *nkondi*, small, squat wooden figures of ferocious aspect, covered with iron nails and blades; and a delicate nine-inch-tall wooden sculpture from the Tabwa region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of a man carrying his chief on his back (in order to prevent his leader's feet from touching the ground). Through April 19. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Paul Robeson: Bearer of a Culture" marks the centennial of the courageous singer and actor with an exhibition of playbills, costumes, F.B.I. files, speeches, correspondence, and other personal mementos. Through July 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"A War in Perspective, 1898-1998: Public Appeals, Memory, and the Spanish-American Conflict" examines the clashing ideologies and the divergent aftermaths for two world powers. Salomon Room; through Aug. 29. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"April Fools of Art"—Gulsen Calik has chosen works for this group show according to a stringent, and charmingly arbitrary, principle. The curator writes, "I was looking for artists whose names contained exclusively the same letters as mine." With Liea Aucklinsun, Kalila Gunn, Annie Kissell, Ula Klagen, Kaci Senegal, and Nina Usling, among others. Opens at 1; through April 23. (Gallery X, 23 W. 129th St. 534-7044.)

"Taboo: Repression and Revolt in Modern Art"—A collection of shocking (or formerly so) works by Kokoschka, Picasso, Dotty Attie, Sue Coe, Christian Schad, and Egon Schiele, among others. Through May 30. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734.)

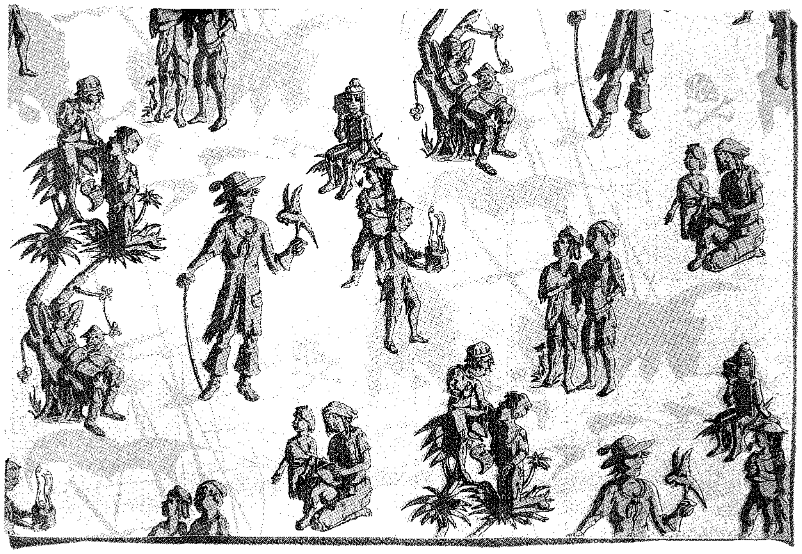
Short List—**james barsness,** Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through May 9. . . . **william beckman** and **kent bellows,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Both shows through May 9. . . . **isabel bishop,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through May 2. . . . **alice dalton brown,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through April 25. . . . **fritz bultman,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. 734-3600. Opens Saturdays at noon; through April 30. . . . **tony cragg,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through April 25. . . . **caio fonseca,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through May 2. . . . **stephen hannock,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through May 9. . . . **eva hesse,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through May 2. . . . **luis jimenez,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through April 25. . . . **kurt kren,** Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441. Through May 31. . . . **vincent la scala,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through May 9. . . . **john lees,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through April 18. . . . **albert marquet,** Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 879-0500. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through May 23. . . . **agnes martin,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through April 25. . . . **larry poons** and **jedd novatt,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; both shows through April 25. . . . **félicien rops,** Shepherd, 21 E. 84th St. 861-4050. Through April 25. . . . **philip smith,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through April 25. . . . **esteban vicente,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300. Open Mondays; through April 18. . . . **john wilde,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through April 25.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Mary Heilmann—The artist began her career as a potter, and some of the effects of glazing still give a certain sloppy sheen to her largely geometric paintings. Such modulations in her work are so incremental that they don't seem to matter, especially in the face of so much resplendent beauty. A superb and pretty show. Through April 25. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Elke Krystufek—"Animal Nightlife: Nothing but Fun," a group of paintings and photographs by a young Austrian artist. Rendered in the currently fashionable style of artily drippy illustration, the paintings demonstrate the artist's affection for Edie Sedgwick. Through May 6. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Rei Naito—A sculptor from Hiroshima creates forms of astonishing purity: A pale, clean, ten-foot-tall wooden dowel rises true as a plumb line from a flawless marble disk, as if marking the center of the universe. Rectangular niches in the wall hold tiny, transparent organza pillows, so delicate that the viewer holds his breath lest he disturb their stillness. "Namelos/Licht" ("Nameless/Light"), taking its title from Rilke, is an ineffably elegant drawing in red pencil which approaches the threshold of imperceptibility. Through April 18. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)



"Contemplative Pirates," by Mary Esch (Bronwyn Keenan).

Mark Sheinkman—In this artist's first show of paintings, canvases curl at the edges and roll up into sculptural forms, mimicking Chinese scrolls, or perhaps monumental peels of birch bark. The visible surfaces are painted in severe, polished monochromes of black, white, and metallic gray, and are scrawled over with broken grids and lines that vibrate like seismic readings. There's a brooding aloofness, if not coyness, in these paintings; the viewer senses that what is revealed is of far less moment than what is concealed inside the scroll. Through April 18. (Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

Dan Walsh—A masterly reinvention of geometric Minimalism, with wit and a funky feeling. The colors in these paintings are pretty, the lines aren't straight, and the squares have an endearing lack of squareness. In "Projection," awkward rectangles outlined in pale gray fail to align, and the ones on the end twinkle, Haring-style. Accompanying the paintings are what Walsh calls artist's books—loose-leaf fantasy catalogues printed with bold gray lines that represent gallery spaces, storage bins, and shelving, with tiny schematic drawings of the artist's paintings tipped in. A rare feat: Walsh has made Minimalism charming. Through April 25. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

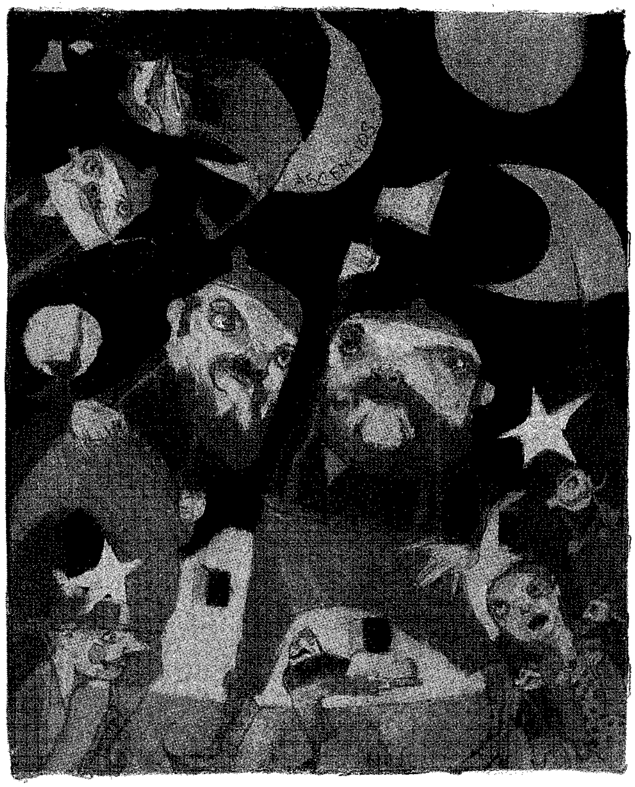
Short List—**siah armajani,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through May 13. . . . **chuck connelly,** De Folin, 529 W. 20th St. 242-3434. Through April 18. . . . **gregory green,** Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through April 25. . . . **anish kapoor,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through May 22. . . . **win knowlton,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through May 9. . . . **michael kvium,** DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through May 9. . . . **robert motherwell,** Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 206-6872. Through May 3. . . . **alice neel,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **robert overby,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through May 2. . . . **james sadek,** Kravets/Wehby, 529 W. 21st St. 352-2238. Through May 2. . . . **buzz spector,** Cristinerose, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297. Through May 9. . . . **randy walz,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through April 18. . . . **mary weatherford,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through April 29.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Pier Consagra—Drawings, paintings, and ceramics by the Roman expatriate. No matter what the medium is, the artist neatly blends baroque and cartoon sensibilities. The ceramics, in particular, look like dwarf Berninis dressed by Alexander McQueen. Through April 25. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777.)

Wim Delvoye—Belgium has produced many great Surrealists, from Magritte and Delvaux to Marcel Broodthaers. Delvoye, the latest in the line, specializes in absurdist cultural collisions. "Missing: 2 Year Old German Shepherd," a large, crisply rendered laser image on canvas, shows an appeal for a lost dog carved into the side of a butte, rendered in the style of the opening titles in a John Ford Western. There are echoes of Broodthaers in a series of kitschy wooden birdhouses strapped into black-leather S&M gear; and a glistening white-enamel coffin encasing a rusty old wheelbarrow is a direct allusion to Magritte's weird coffins. Through April 25. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160.)

Marcel Dzama—A large selection of small drawings by this young Canadian artist. Dzama's pictures belong to a recognizable artistic trajectory: looking over the doodling, one is reminded of fellow gallery artists Raymond Pettibon and Douglas Kolk; of Mike Kelley, now the grand old man of subversive cartoons; and perhaps of the daft and cruel humor of the late German artist Martin Kippenberger. Definitely a strong début. Through April 18. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)



Britten's "Paul Bunyan," at New York City Opera.

N. ASCENCIOS

Mary Esch—A variety of portraits and repeated tableaux (of parties and pirates and wenches and sinking ships) that achieve an awkward sexiness and slightly disturbing background familiarity, like wallpaper or a weird cousin. Through April 18. (Bronwyn Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.)

Peter Hristoff—In a series of large-scale mixed-media works on rice paper, this Turkish-born artist has reinvented the rigorous symmetry of the prayer rug, substituting spiralling, brightly colored silhouettes of roosters, men with erect penises, birds, and butterflies for the geometric and floral patterns of the originals. "Ten Prayers," a suite of monochrome silk screens, presents allegories of mystical spirituality with the graphic immediacy of paper cutouts. Hristoff's paintings are less successful, garishly colored sentimental invocations of his native land. Through April 25. (Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863.)

Frank Moore—Eight paintings thrusting American vernacular imagery into fantastical, often menacing situations. In "Lullaby II," tiny polar bears roam the Arctic wilderness of an unmade bed; one of them poses, bloodied, next to a seal it has just killed. Moore has created frames that reflect the paintings' imagery: that of "Lullaby II" is made of white wood carved in the shape of pillows. There's an admirable unity of conception in Moore's paintings, but as is so often the case with the neo-Surrealists, the artist's imagination exceeds the capacities of his stiff painting technique. Through April 25. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685.)

Cornelia Parker—For her installation "Mass (Colder Darker Matter)," this British artist suspended pieces of charred wood from the ceiling. The formal effect recalls late-sixties post-Minimal experiments, but knowing the source of her materials—a Texas church that had been struck by lightning—allows for more of a sublime shiver. Through April 18. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Julia Scher—"Wonderland" is an impressive installation of a futuristic children's playroom reimagined as an Orwellian nightmare. A child-size musical keyboard produces unsettling noises and interruptions while a psychedelic light show plays around the gallery, bouncing off fun-house mirrors and posters of children dressed as security guards in pink uniforms. The soundtrack alternates snatches of fascistic gibberish and instrumental snippets from the Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit." The piece powerfully weaves its hypnotic, mind-bending mood, and the cultural themes are blended with a literate skill by no means common in the waning world of installation art. Through April 25. (Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203.)

Short List—**MATTHEW ANTEZZO,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through April 25. . . . **JOHN CHAMBERLAIN,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through April 25. . . . **HELMUT FEDERLE,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through May 30. . . . **CARL FUDGE,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through April 25. . . . **RICHARD HARPER,** Lewin, 136 Prince St. 431-4750. Through April 25. . . . **LANI IRWIN,** Perlow, 560 Broadway. 941-1220. Through May 5. . . . **ZBIGNIEW LIBERA,** McIntyre, 45 Crosby St. 334-9666. Through May 12. . . . **LIZA LOU,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through April 18. . . . **SEAN MELLYN,** Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through May 2. . . . **SHEILA PEPE,** Inglett, 100 Wooster St. 343-0573. Through May 9. . . . **SHAWN SPENCER,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through May 2. . . . **FRED STONEHOUSE,** M-13 Gallery, 72 Greene St. 925-3007. Through May 2. . . . **RUBÉN TORRES-LLORCA,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through April 25. . . . **ANDY WARHOL,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through June 13.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—April 16: Fine English furniture and art works. . . . ¶ April 21: Silver, *objets de vertu*, and Russian art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Sotheby's—April 15: Rugs and carpets. . . . ¶ April 16: Auctions of sporting paintings and of porcelain. . . . ¶ April 17: English furniture. . . . ¶ April 21: An auction of rare books and manuscripts, the first session of three dispersing the collection of Jaime Ortiz-Patiño. The library includes such enticements as an illuminated Hours of Saint-Lô (circa 1470), the 1462 Bible of Fust and Schoeffer, and a first edition of Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal," inscribed by the author to Delacroix. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

New York Antiquarian Book Fair—The thirty-eighth installment of an annual classic. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. April 16-19. For information, call 777-5218.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Simpson Kalisher—"Railroad Men," a strong show of vintage prints from the fifties. In quiet, unself-conscious black-and-white pictures, Kalisher captured the pride and the burdens of the trainmasters, the boomer switchmen, and the rest of that dying breed. Through April 25. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

Alexander Liberman—This survey of the artist's work, mostly from the middle of the century, is loaded with stylish portraits of great artists, including a wry three-quarter visage of Marcel Duchamp and a studio shot of Alberto Giacometti sculpting one of his famously elongated women, with a cigarette lodged between his fingers. Through April 18. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-72)—"Master Prints," a retrospective of the lyrical and mysterious work of this optician and autodidact. Through April 25. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

David Smith (1906-65)—"Photographs 1931-65," an exhibition devoted primarily to the photographic work of one of America's greatest modernist sculptors. Select sculptures, maquettes, paintings, and works on paper are also on view, providing a necessary context. Some of Smith's photographs are theatricalized documentations of his sculptures, in the landscape or in the studio; other, more compelling pictures show the artist to have been an avid experimenter with photography. He knew the work of László Moholy-Nagy, and even shared his own images with that master of European avant-gardism. Smith's photographs often read as collages, as they feature calculated overexposures, extreme cropping, and incisions in the emulsion. They also recall French Surrealist photography of the twenties and thirties—not a surprising affinity. Through April 18. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

International Center of Photography—"Micha Bar-Am: An Israeli Photobiography." Through May 31. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Robert Capa: Photographs," a retrospective of the war correspondent's career. Through June 7. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Group Show—Early works by Peter Hujar, Joel Meyerowitz, and Milton Greene. Through May 9. (Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300.)

Short List—**EDOUARD-DENIS BALDUS,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through April 18. . . . **UTA BARTH,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 925-8035. Through April 23. . . . **LEENDERT BLOK,** Schoormans, 12 E. 2nd St. 477-6953. Through April 25. . . . **SALLY GALL,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through May 22. . . . **CHARLES HAGEN,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5; through April 26. . . . **O. WINSTON LINK,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through May 2. . . . **INGE MORATH,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through May 2. . . . **AUGUST SANDER,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **ED VAN DER ELSKEN,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through April 25. . . . **WILLIAM WEGMAN,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through April 25. . . . **STANISLAW IGNACY WITKIEWICZ,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through May 2. . . . **MARION POST WOLCOTT** and **SEBASTIÃO SALGADO,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through May 23.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG,** with Eva Johansson, Ben Heppner, Gert Henning-Jensen, James Johnson, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and Hans Sotin; conducted by James Levine. (April 15 at 6.) . . . With Clemens Bieber instead of Mr. Henning-Jensen. (April 18 at 6.) . . . **THE MAKROPULOS CASE,** by Janáček, with Catherine Malfitano, Graham Clark, Tom Fox, and Stephen West; Charles Mackerras. (April 16 at 8 and April 18 at 1.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY,** with Galina Gorchakova, Jane Bunnell, Michael Sylvester, and Lucio Gallo; Franz Vote. (April 17 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. . . . **NOTE:** These offerings conclude the company's season, but performances will continue April 23-May 9, when the Met hosts the Kirov Opera in four productions of Russian operas.)

New York City Opera—**CARMEN.** (April 15-16 and April 21 at 7:30, and April 18-19 at 1:30.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY.** (April 17 at 8.) . . . **PAUL BUNYAN,** by Britten. (April 18 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," as well as Schumann's Piano Concerto (with András Schiff) and Symphony No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 16-18 at 8.)

Boston Symphony—At Carnegie Hall, Seiji Ozawa conducting. April 15-16 at 7:30: Bach's St. Matthew Passion, with tenor John Mark Ainsley as the Evangelist, baritone Wolfgang Holzmair as Jesus, and a quartet of soloists comprising soprano Christiane Oelze, contralto Nathalie Stutzmann, tenor Kurt Streit, and bass-baritone David Wilson-Johnson. . . . ¶ April 17 at 8: Takemitsu's "Asterism" and "riverrun" (both featuring pianist Peter Serkin) and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7.

Israel Camerata Jerusalem—Avner Biron conducts Haydn's Symphony No. 89, Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Alexander Korsantiya), the première of Mark Kopytman's "Behind All This . . . ," and Mozart's Symphony No. 40. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. April 15 at 8.)

Tallis Scholars—The early-music choir, directed by Peter Phillips, performs sacred music from the Iberian Renaissance: motets by Francisco Guerrero, Sebastián de Vivanco, Alonso Lobo, and Cristóbal de Morales, plus a Requiem by Victoria. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. April 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 800-627-0655.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Robert Spano conducts a semi-staged concert version of Berlioz's opera manqué "La Damnation de Faust," with mezzo-soprano Sara Fulgoni, tenor Vinson Cole, baritone James Maddalena, bass-baritone Jeffrey Wells, and the New York Choral Society. Presented in French, with English surtitles. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. April 17 at 8. 718-636-4100.) . . . ¶ The same, in an unstaged concert version. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 19 at 3.)

Manhattan Virtuosi—Marlon Daniel leads an afternoon of Spanish music: Surinach's "Ritmo Jondo," Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen" (with violinist Vesselin Gellev), Turina's "La Oración del Torero," and Falla's "El Amor Brujo" (with mezzo-soprano Kate Aldrich and dancer Maya de Silva). (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 866-2958. April 19 at 3.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts Auber's "Actæon" Overture, a new work by Robert Miller, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto (with Dimitri Berlinsky), and Glazunov's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Justin Kolb). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. April 20 at 2 and 7 and April 21 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Two Perlmans—Itzhak Perlman makes his concert-hall conducting début, leading the New York Chamber Symphony in Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings and two works in which he doubles as violin soloist: Mozart's E-Major Adagio (K. 261) and C-Major Rondo (K. 373). He also conducts Chopin's F-Minor Piano Concerto, in which his daughter, Navah Perlman, appears as soloist. (Alice Tully Hall. April 21 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5460. A benefit concert.)

Choirs and Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola—Kent Tritle directs Vaughan Williams's "Dona Nobis Pacem" (with soprano Rachel Rosales and baritone Eugene Perry as soloists), Robert Convery's "I Have a Dream" (written in tribute to Martin Luther King, and here featuring Mr. Perry), and elegiac works by Herbert Howells, Tchaikovsky, and Mendelssohn. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. April 21 at 7:30.)

Collegiate Chorale—Robert Bass directs the chorus and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Fauré's Requiem (with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy and baritone Richard Zeller) and several choral works by Brahms. (Carnegie Hall. April 21 at 8.)

RECITALS

David Finckel and Wu Han—The cellist and the pianist perform and discuss selections from their repertoire with broadcaster Robert Sherman. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 15 at 2.)

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Alicia Zizzo—The pianist performs long-lost or reconstructed scores by Gershwin and discusses them with Gershwin biographer Edward Jablonski. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400. April 15 at 6:30.)

Ensemble 21—The modern-music group marks its fifth anniversary by performing compositions by Bruce Taub, Jeff Nichols, James Carr, Olga Neuwirth, Roger Redgate, and Michael Finnissy. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 15 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Cellist Ronald Thomas and pianist Randall Hodgkinson perform Beethoven's D-Major Cello Sonata (Op. 102, No. 2); violinist Ida Levin completes the ensemble for Schubert's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. April 16 at 7:30 and April 19 at 4.)

Albert Tiu—In his New York début recital, the 1998 winner of the Juilliard School's William Petschek Award (given annually to an outstanding pianist) performs an unusually well balanced program: Beethoven's Six Bagatelles (Op. 126), Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel," and then, after intermission, Bolcom's Nine Bagatelles and Rachmaninoff's "Variations on a Theme by Chopin." (Alice Tully Hall. April 16 at 8.)

Anthony Philip Pattin—Performing piano works by Ravel (his Sonatine), George Walker (Sonata No. 2), Franck (his "Prélude, Choral et Fugue"), and Scriabin (Twelve Etudes, Op. 8). (Weill Recital Hall. April 16 at 8.)

Frederic Rzewski—Three piano recitals spotlight the distinguished composer and pianist. April 16: Rzewski performs his recent "epic novel" for piano, "The Road." . . . ¶ April 17: His famous variations on "The People United Will Never be Defeated" (played by Stephen Drury), in addition to his Piano Piece No. 4 and "De Profundis" (performed by Anthony deMare). . . . ¶ April 18: His "Chain of Thought," plus pieces by Mr. DeMare, Kathleen Supové, and others. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Evenings at 8.)

John Aler and Friends—The tenor is joined by soprano Sari Gruber, mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, baritone Richard Zeller, and pianist Kenneth Merrill to perform Liza Lehmann's late-Victorian song cycle for four voices, "In a Persian Garden," in addition to songs and ensembles by Haydn, Schubert, and Brahms. (Weill Recital Hall. April 17 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Violinist Cho-Liang Lin and pianist Barry Douglas perform Ravel's Violin Sonata; Gary Hoffman and Mr. Douglas offer Chopin's Cello Sonata; and all three join for Dvořák's Piano Trio in E Minor (the "Dumky"). (Alice Tully Hall. April 17 at 8 and April 19 at 5.)

Felicity Lott—Every so often it happens: an ultra-distinguished artist shows up to perform a New York début recital long after one should have been scheduled. The eminent, good-humored British soprano Felicity Lott has appeared in this town in opera and as an orchestral soloist, and a couple of seasons ago she offered a delightful duo recital with the mezzo-soprano Ann Murray, but this is the first time she's taken the stage alone. Well, hardly alone: she'll be joined by the pianist Graham Johnson (a prince among collaborative pianists), and together they'll perform Poulenc's "La Courte Paille," Britten's "On This Island," and sets of songs by Strauss and Barber. (Alice Tully Hall. April 19 at 2.)

Kenneth Huber—Pianist, performing Beethoven's E-Flat-Major Sonata (Op. 31, No 3), the Bach/Busoni Chaconne in D Minor, and both books of Brahms's "Variations on a Theme of Paganini." (Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, 28 E. 20th St. April 19 at 2. No fee beyond museum admission.)

Guarneri Quartet—The foursome performs Beethoven's Quartets in B-Flat Major (Op. 130) and C Major (Op. 59, No. 3). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. April 19 at 3. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Si-Yo Music Society—An all-Schubert concert: his A-Major Duo for Violin and Piano, Arpeggione Sonata, and B-Flat-Major Piano Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 19 at 3.)

New Millennium Ensemble—The sextet presents works by Haydn, Andrzej Panufnik, Peter Child, and Tamar Diesendruck (a première). (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. April 19 at 3.)

Florence Quivar and Victor Benedetti—In a concert sponsored by the George London Foundation, the mezzo-soprano and the baritone perform works by Purcell, Schubert, Mahler, Ravel, and Britten, with pianist Brian Zeger assisting. The tenor James King will also be on hand to discuss his career and the music he sang. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. April 19 at 4.)

Angela Lee—Cellist, with pianist Maria Lee, performing works by Debussy, Janáček, and others. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. April 19 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Mannes Percussion Ensemble—Performing works by John Cage and Steve Reich. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. April 20 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Igal Kesselman—Pianist, performing sonatas by Rachmaninoff (his Second) and Prokofiev (his Sixth). (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. April 20 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York New Music Ensemble—The group offers a sixtieth-birthday tribute to Charles Wuorinen, which includes his "New York Notes" and "The Great Procession," as well as several musical greetings written by other composers. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. April 20 at 8.)

Nokuthula Ngwenyama—The violist offers works by Shostakovich, Bach, and others; pianist Reiko Uchida assists. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 21 at 2.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Outer Borough Stroll—In anticipation of Earth Day (April 22), park rangers from the Gateway National Recreation Area and members of the advocacy group Friends of Gateway have organized a six-mile guided tour of Staten Island. The walk starts at the Staten Island Ferry terminal, takes in Fort Wadsworth, which dates back to the Revolutionary War, winds along the outer borough's South and Midland Beach boardwalks, and ends at the hundred-and-ninety-eight-acre Miller Field. (April 18, starting at 10. For more information, call 352-9330.)

Readings—April 16 at 7: By novelists Rick Moody and Russell Banks and poet Chase Twichell, from their work. (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between Second and Third Aves. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 17 at 7: By poets Joy Harjo and Thomas Lux. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 17 at 8: By poets Elizabeth Macklin, Sarah Arvio, and Tom Breidenbach. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 19 at 7: By memoirist Kathryn Harrison and novelist A. M. Homes, from works in progress. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 21 at 7: By poet J. D. McClatchy, from his new book about poetry, "Twenty Questions." Edmund White introduces the evening. (A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—April 16 at 7: Writer Diane Ackerman gives a lecture titled "What a Poem Knows." (Poets House, 72 Spring St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 21 at 6:15: Dahesh Museum curator Stephen Edidin moderates a discussion about painting nudes, with artists Philip Pearlstein, Joan Semmel, and Vincent Desiderio. (Dahesh Museum, 601 Fifth Ave., at 48th St. 759-0606.) . . . ¶ April 21 at 8: *Village Voice* dance critic Deborah Jowitt interviews Peter Martins, artistic director of the New York City Ballet. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Tomboy Lit

At the center of Jonathan Lethem's new novel, **Girl in Landscape** (Doubleday), there's a tough little fourteen-year-old named Pella Marsh. In addition to all the normal travails of growing up, Pella has another challenge: she reaches adolescence not on Earth but on a newly discovered world called the Planet of the Archbuilders.

"Girl in Landscape" fits nicely into a larger tradition—that of books about great tomboys. Two that have particularly inspired Lethem are Shirley Jackson's **We Have Always Lived in the Castle** (Viking Penguin) and Carson McCullers's **The Member of the Wedding** (Bantam). In Jackson's novel, Lethem feels that the author "validates the magical and gothic feelings that are inside the tomboy character, Merricat, so completely that they take over the book and the reality of the town." And although McCullers's book may seem, on the surface, more gentle, Lethem doesn't see it as sentimental. "There's this vibrant thread of anger in Frankie that makes it all really sing," he says.

Louise Fitzhugh's **Harriet the Spy** and **The Long Secret** (both HarperCollins) work together so beautifully, Lethem feels, that he wonders if they weren't designed to ease young readers from children's books into adult literature. "'Harriet the Spy' is a brilliant young-adult book; the characters are terribly compelling," he says. "And then, in 'The Long Secret,' suddenly they've turned some corner and Harriet and her friend Beth Ellen are themselves saddled with the same kind of longing and ambiguity as the adult characters in 'Harriet the Spy.'"

One of the strangest tomboys is Little My, a character in Tove Jansson's Moomin series, which includes **Moominsummer Madness** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). "Little My is this almost insectlike girl who always keeps to a distance," Lethem says. She's often spotted "digging holes and torturing ants and building herself little huts in the woods." Lethem views Little My as falling somewhere between Jackson's character and the "Alien" of movie fame. "She's a distillation of that moment in adolescence when you're feeling so alien that you think you might really be an insect," Lethem says.

ELIZA GRAN

THE
Book
PAGE.

[ISRAEL AT 50]

ISRAEL AT FIFTY
BY DAN PERRY AND ALFRED IRONSIDE

ISRAEL AT FIFTY

by Dan Perry and Alfred Ironside

Before there was a state, there was a people with a dream, and the willpower to realize that dream. This pioneering and defiant spirit of Israel is vividly captured with photographs and essays that distill the essence of Israel's people and history, giving us a complete picture of this evolving nation. (GPG)

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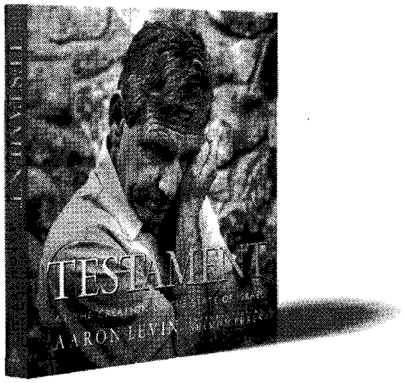

TESTAMENT

Aaron Levin

History is etched on each face in this collection of portraits and essays celebrating Israel's fifty years. Each person in this incredible testament has been a part of Israel since its inception in 1948: Their stories reveal Israel as not only "the homeland," but as home. (Artisan)

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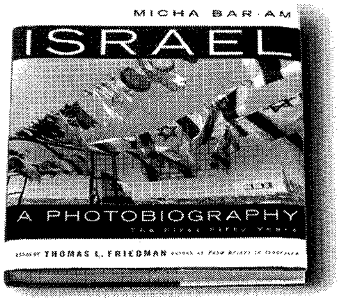

ISRAEL: A PHOTOBIOGRAPHY

by Micha Bar-Am

Who better to tell the story of Israel than a man who has made it his "lifetime assignment." Micha Bar-Am's photographs, taken throughout Israel's fifty years, immerse us in the passion and history of a country where "nothing is ever just itself." (Simon & Schuster)

Publisher's Price: $40.00 Discount **30%**
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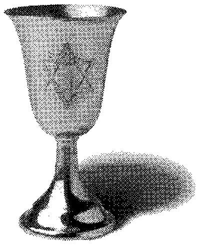
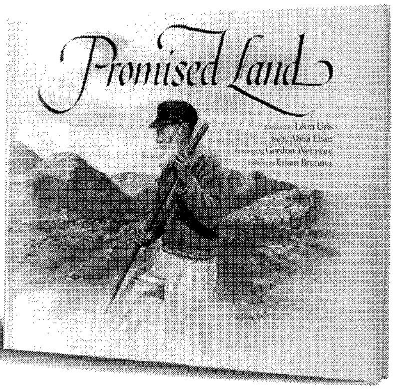
*I have striven
not to laugh at human actions,
not to weep at them,
nor to hate them,
but to understand them.*
-Baruch Spinoza





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THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

Chinese Box—Wayne Wang's drama of love and death in Hong Kong during the last six months before it became part of China. With Jeremy Irons, Gong Li, Maggie Cheung, and Ruben Blades. In English and Cantonese. Opening April 17. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center.)

Major League: Back to the Minors—A minor-league baseball team of misfits shapes up under a new manager (Scott Bakula), in this comedy written and directed by John Warren. Opening April 17.

Nightwatch—A thriller, directed by Ole Bornedal, about serial killings and the morgue night watchman (Ewan McGregor) who becomes the prime suspect in the murders. Also with Nick Nolte, Patricia Arquette, and Josh Brolin. Opening April 17.

The Object of My Affection—Jennifer Aniston and Paul Rudd star in a romantic comedy, written by Wendy Wasserstein and directed by Nicholas Hytner. Opening April 17. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Paulie—The adventures of a parrot who can really talk. Directed by John Roberts. Opening April 17. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Guild.)

Sour Grapes—A comedy, written and directed by Larry David, in which a man wins a slot-machine jackpot with a borrowed quarter. With Steven Weber and Craig Bierko. Opening April 17.

Suicide Kings—Peter O'Fallon's black comedy involves a kidnapped heiress and a kidnapped mobster. With Christopher Walken, Denis Leary, Henry Thomas, and Sean Patrick Flanery. Opening April 17. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

TwentyFourSeven—Bob Hoskins stars in writer-director Shane Meadows's drama about young men in a small English town who gain self-confidence from boxing. Opening April 15.

Wild Man Blues—Barbara Kopple's documentary chronicles Woody Allen and his jazz band on tour in Europe in 1996. Opening April 17. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The American Friend (1977)—The German director Wim Wenders is attracted to the idea of telling a story, but he can't quite keep his mind on it; he overdoses on mood—poetic urban masochism—in this adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's crime novel "Ripley's Game." Wenders's unsettling compositions are neurotically beautiful visions of a disordered world, but the film doesn't have the nasty, pleasurable cleverness of a good thriller; dramatically, it's stagnant—inverted Wagnerianism. Bruno Ganz is impressive as the watchful, anxious-eyed hero; with more than a half-dozen directors (including Dennis Hopper, Nicholas Ray, Gérard Blain, and Samuel Fuller) playing crooks. Script by Wenders; cinematography by Robby Müller. In English, German, and French.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; April 16 and April 18.)

As Good as It Gets—A romantic comedy directed and co-written (with Mark Andrus) by James L. Brooks, in which an improbable trio overcomes a heap of troubles and finds collective happiness, sitcom style. Jack Nicholson stars as a romance novelist with a seriously alienating manner, Helen Hunt is a waitress with a young son who has a life-threatening disease, and Greg Kinnear is a gay painter with a sweet smile and no visible erotic attachments. You keep expecting to hear a laugh track.—*Daphne Merkin* (1/5/98) (Embassy 2, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Big Lebowski—After the mysteriously affecting "Fargo," the Coen brothers have reverted to their pose of cynical disengagement with a movie that—insofar as it's about anything—is about the interface of bowling and Orthodox Judaism. Set in Los Angeles, this irritatingly antic caper stars Jeff Bridges as the Dude, a carefree seventies-style dropout who hangs out at the local bowling alley with his buddies Walter (John Goodman), a chronically irate Nam vet, and Donny (Steve Buscemi), the trio's sweet but dim verbal foil. The clever dialogue and beautiful production design (the lavish dream sequences look like Busby Berkeley on ecstasy) almost make you forget the vacancy at the movie's core, but in the end there's no escaping the feeling that the Coens are speaking a secret language. With Julianne Moore and John Turturro.—*D.M.* (3/23/98) (Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Big One—Writer-director Michael Moore takes on corporate downsizing. (Angelika Film Center, Gotham Cinema, and Lincoln Square.)

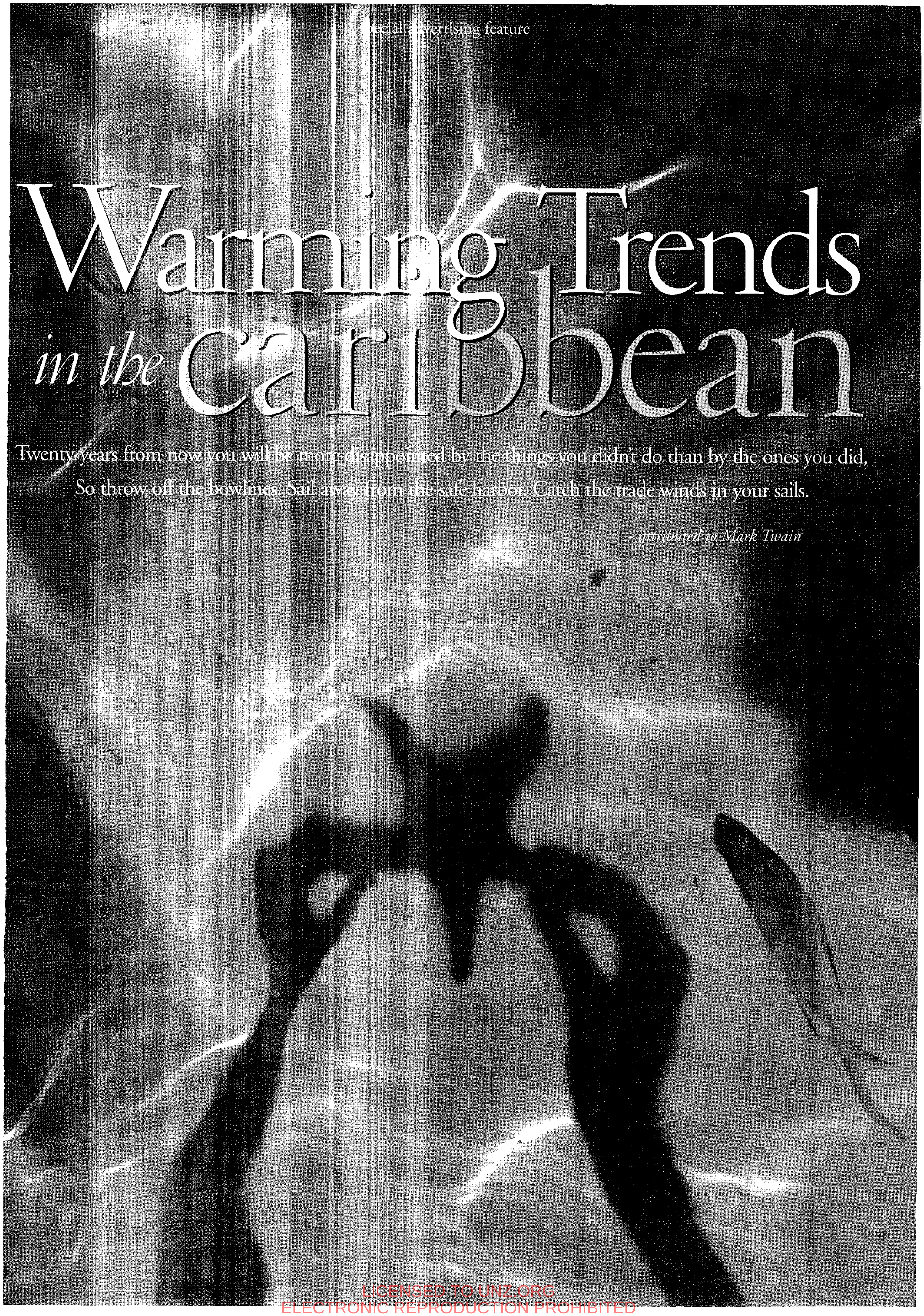
The Butcher Boy—The Irish director Neil Jordan's daring new film, adapted from the novel by Patrick McCabe, is a potent remembrance of terrible things past, narrated in a tone of despairing hilarity. With Eamonn Owens, Stephen Rea, Aisling O'Sullivan, Alan Boyle, Fiona Shaw, and Sinead O'Connor. (4/6/98) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

Character—A drama, based on the 1938 novel by Ferdinand Bordewijk, about an illegitimate son, his vengeful father, and murder. Directed by Mike van Diem. In Dutch. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Regency.)

City of Angels—Nicolas Cage and Meg Ryan star in a romantic drama, written by Dana Stevens, about an angel who wants to experience being human and the woman he loves. Directed by Brad Silberling. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Diary of a Chambermaid (1945)—Jean Renoir parodies historical romances in this wildly improbable divertissement. Chambermaid Paulette Goddard loves gloomy master Hurd Hatfield, but his Freudianized mama, Judith Anderson, and a whole lot of other people get in the way. The screenplay is by Burgess Meredith from a novel by Octave Mirbeau; Meredith also contrived to find a part for himself, as a demented gent who eats his way through a rose garden. Francis Lederer, meant to be a menacing servant, is the most elegantly turned-out actor in the movie; probably he just couldn't resist looking his best. It's slightly crazy but highly entertaining.—*P.K.* (Anthology Film Archives; April 18-19.)

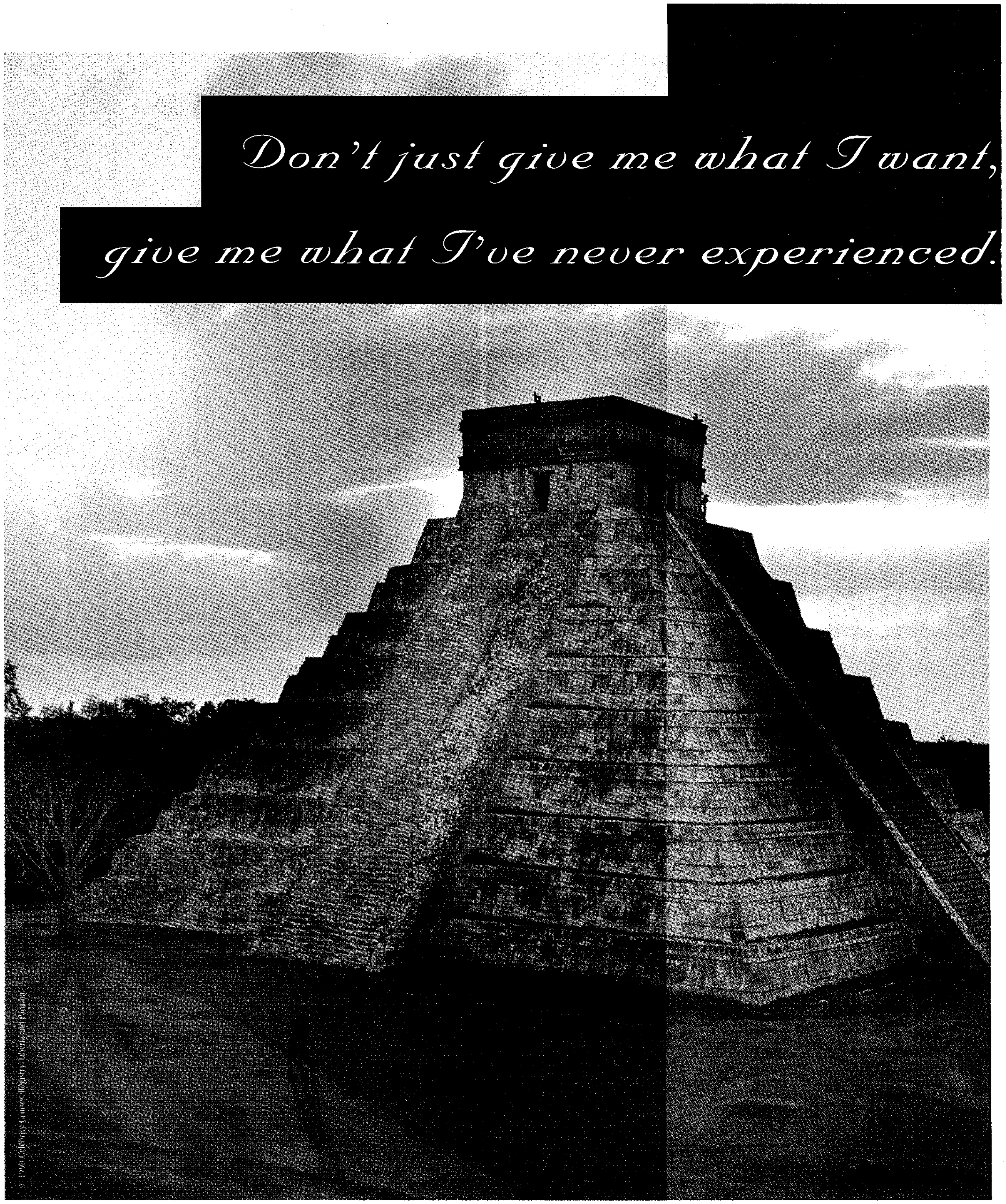
Fireworks—The seventh and most sombre work from the cultish Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. In the new film, which he also wrote and co-edited, Kitano plays Nishi, a policeman on the slide. Some colleagues were shot on duty, and, rightly or wrongly, Nishi takes the blame. Meanwhile, his wife is dying, so he takes her away for a country vacation, which he finances by robbing a bank; despite all the cops and gangsters on their trail, the



Warming Trends *in the* Caribbean

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did.
So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.

- attributed to Mark Twain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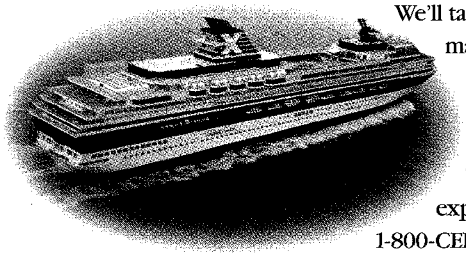

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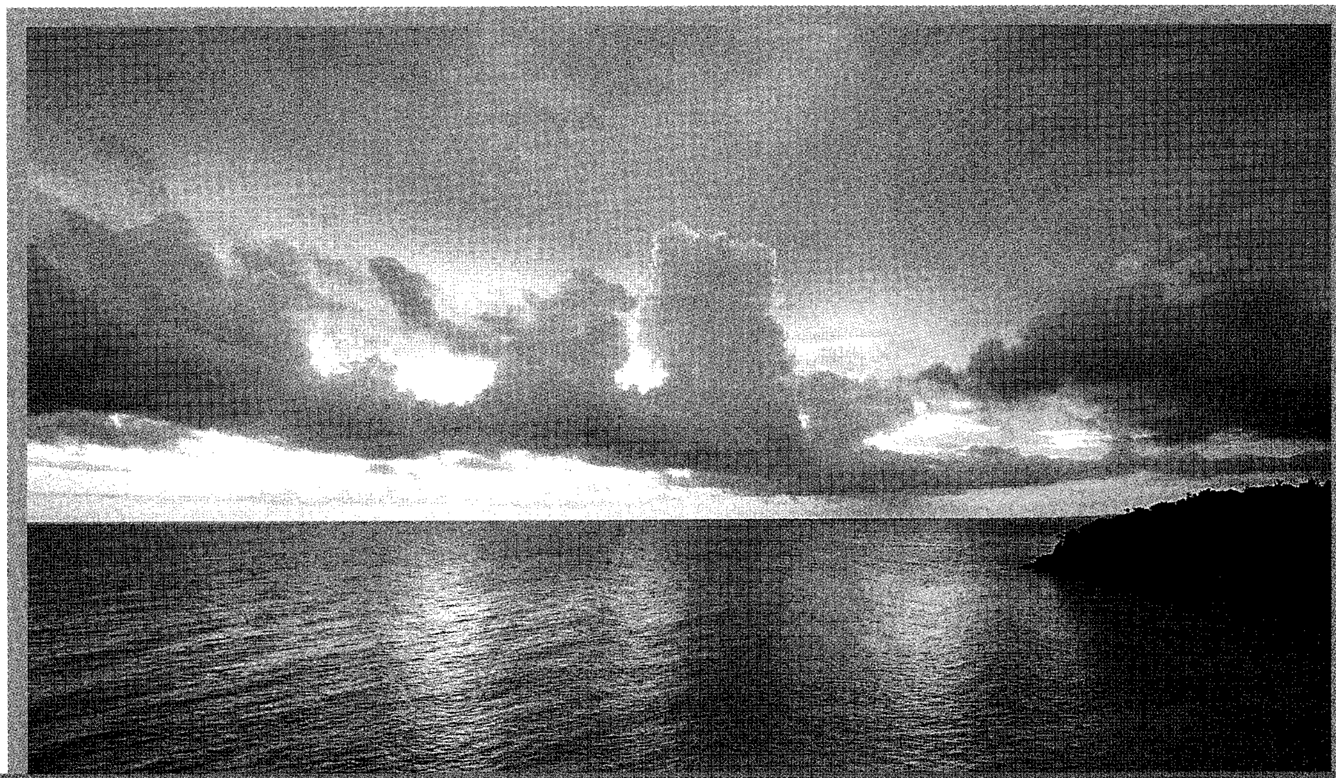


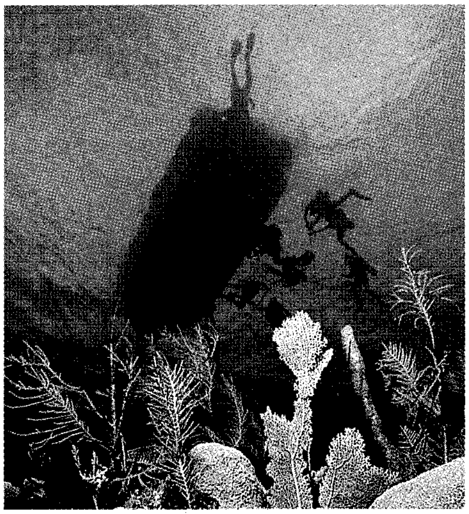
While some vacationers cling to tried-and-true destinations, variety truly is the spice of the Caribbean islands. Travelers who crave fresh adventures and experiences will find plenty in the tropics that can increase their knowledge and add to their skills. And on the best expeditions, people learn more about themselves as well. Whether you've visited the Caribbean many times before or are contemplating your first trip, there are a plethora of sunny resorts that have perfected the art of hospitality and offer a number of activities likely to enrich your journey.

The Cayman Islands

Make a Picture Perfect

Widely known as an ideal sanctuary for diving—thanks to calm waters, healthy coral reefs, and visibility to 150 feet—the three Cayman Islands have become a prime destination for underwater photographers.

To hone your picture-taking skills, take a short beginner or advanced class at Cathy Church's Underwater Photo Centre at the Sunset House hotel in George Town on Grand Cayman. It's the Caribbean's oldest and largest underwater photography school, and the place to learn how best to capture wrecks, flora, and the otherworldly creatures at Stingray City, probably the most exciting twelve-foot dive in the world. Snorkelers and divers can rent underwater cameras and video equipment at the center.



Jamaica

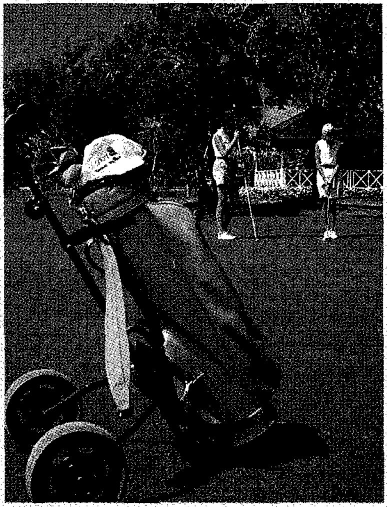
Learn a New Sport

Although Jamaica's seemingly endless beaches make it difficult to leave the shore, this verdant island is well worth exploring. Safari Tours Jamaica in Ocho Rios offers six different expeditions in zebra-striped, 110 Defender Land Rovers. The tours can be combined with river tubing, biking, and even mule treks. S.U.V.s pause at tropical swimming holes, art galleries, and historic former plantations.

Some of the Caribbean's all-inclusive resorts have upscaled—and they're ideal for active vacationers who want a range of activities without having to pay an extra fee for each one.

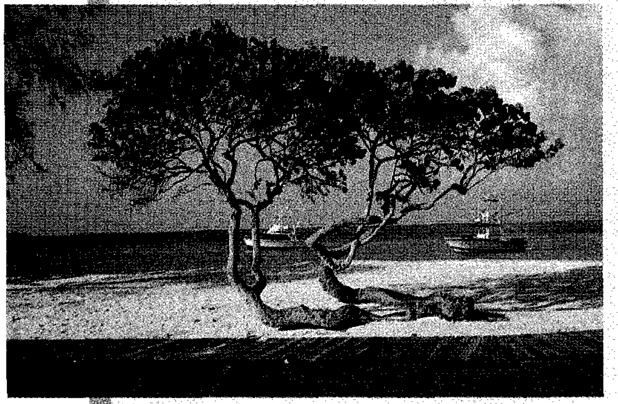
— by Susan Breslow Sardone

diving in The Cayman Islands



Top-of-the-line equipment and professional instruction in tennis, scuba diving, snorkeling, waterskiing, sailing, and windsurfing are available at the three SuperClubs in Jamaica. Grand Lido Negril and Grand Lido Sans Souci are both winners of the AAA Four-Diamond award. The newest SuperClub, Grand Lido Braco, is a seaside gingerbread village comprised of shops, and a Jamaican restaurant, dance hall, and bakery. Like the other SuperClubs, it welcomes couples, singles, and families with children sixteen and older.

Sandals—which in addition to Jamaica also has resorts in Antigua, St. Lucia, and The Islands Of The Bahamas—has added new spas, fitness centers, and innovative dining options to the all-inclusive experience. At Sandals Golf & Country Club in Jamaica, which has a championship, eighteen-hole, par-71 course, PGA golf pro Andy Gorman holds free, hour-long, golf clinics daily. The clinics are for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level players, and are open to guests at any Sandals resort in Jamaica.



Get the Royal Treatment

Fit for royals (and it has accommodated several), the posh Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club in Montego Bay also sports an equestrian center where polo is played. With four-hundred acres nestled along an idyllic crescent beach, this eco-conscious resort also has an extravagant health and fitness center. Accommodations include private villas and five-bedroom "cottages" decorated in Great House Jamaican mahogany furniture made on the property by local artisans.

The Out Islands Of The Bahamas

Canoe to a Wildlife Nursery

Aquatic and avian populations in secluded Fernandez Bay Village on Cat Island far outnumber humans. Since there's only one paved road on the island, the best way to get a closer look at the local wildlife is via canoe or kayak. Alone or with a guide, paddle into the sheltered, shallow creek that nature has turned into an aquatic nursery. There, baby sharks, manta rays, bonefish, egrets, terns, herons, and other local residents frolic—and so can you.

Become a Shell Connoisseur

Nearly everyone who's ever walked a beach has stooped to admire shells and fragments washed ashore. At Club Peace & Plenty on Exuma, you can become a serious collector in the company of Daniel Rabinovitch, a PADI dive instructor with extensive marine biology experience. He escorts guests to beaches in Elizabeth Harbor or to nearby Pidgeon Key, where the marine life is abundant. Search for sand dollars, sea urchins, cockleshells, and angel wings on a half- or full-day excursion; then sort through your treasures during a picnic on the beach.

Delve into Deep Sea Fishing

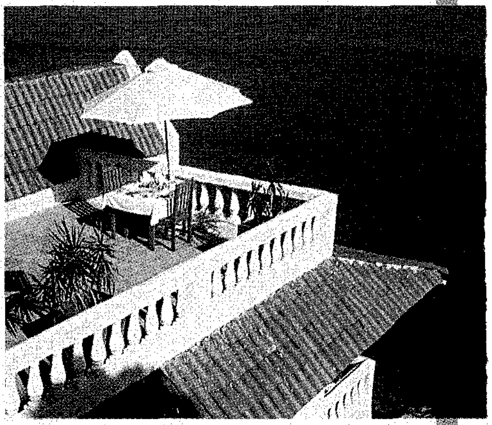
If your idea of the perfect getaway is casting a line and waiting for a bite, you won't have to wait long at Cape Santa Maria Beach Resort on Long Island. This Oak Bay Marine Group all-villa property has charter fishing boats moored along its beachfront that take anglers out for seven-hour deep sea, reef, or bonefishing excursions to bring back marlin, barracuda, dorado, snapper, grouper, and bonefish. Bait, tackle, and gear are supplied. The hotel can arrange to have its chef prepare your catch—or help you mount the big one that didn't get away.

Puerto Rico

Reach for the Stars

On the Mona Passage in western Puerto Rico, in Rincón, the luxe Horned Dorset Primavera—a beachside, private-estate hotel that is an exemplary Relais & Chateaux member—was named Puerto Rico's best overall hotel in the latest "Zagat Survey: U.S. Hotels, Resorts & Spas." It is near the Arecibo Observatory where the world's largest radio telescope (featured in the film "Contact") is housed. Self-guided interactive exhibits and video presentations at the observatory's new visitors facility zoom in on celestial stars and the world of astronomy.

The stars of Puerto Rico's rich legacy of art and culture are also thriving. To experience their creations firsthand, visitors can follow a network of roads known as *Rutas Artesanales* that lead to artisans' shops and homes around the island. In these intimate settings, visitors



Top, SuperClubs Grand Lido Braco; *left*, Cape Santa Maria Beach Resort; *right*, Horned Dorset Primavera in Puerto Rico

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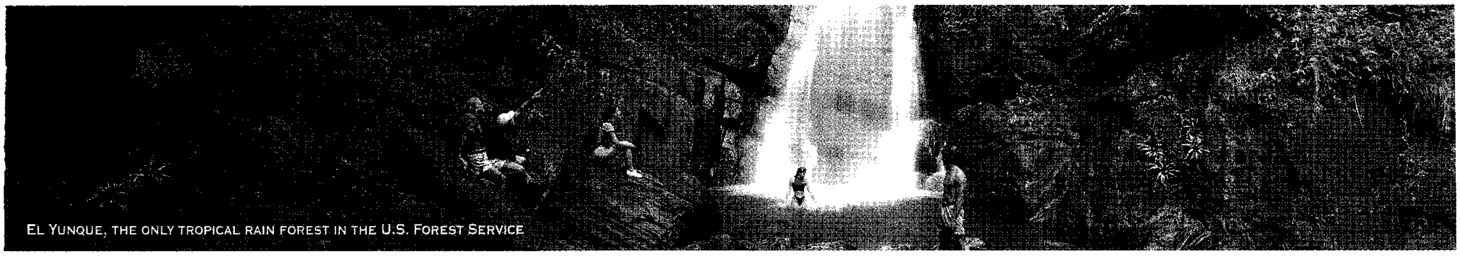
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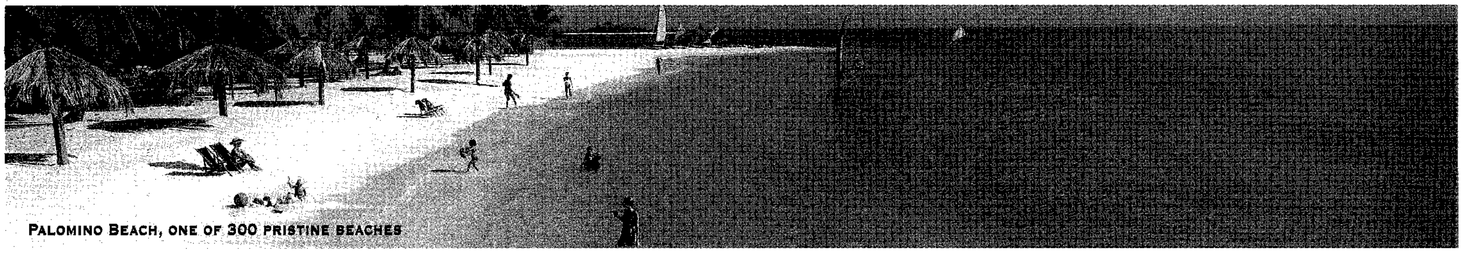
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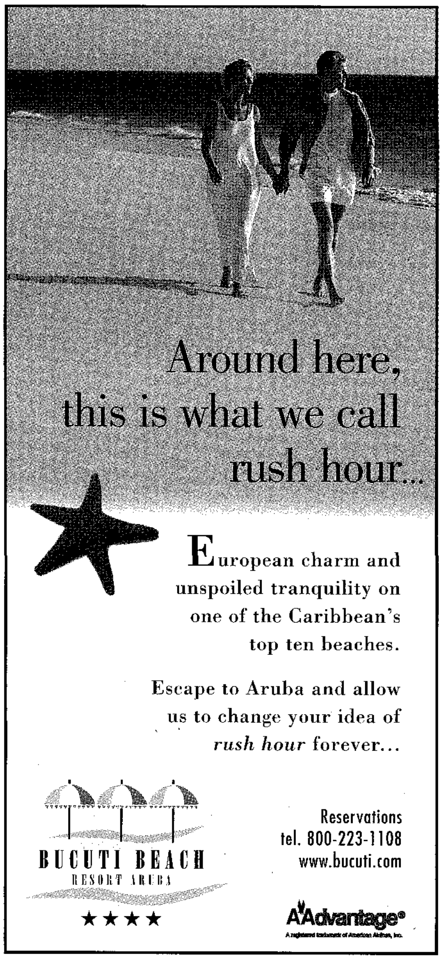
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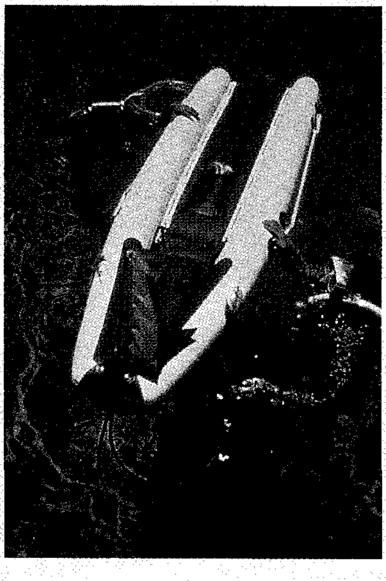
meet craftspeople and learn how the country's fusion of Taino Indian, African, and Spanish cultures influences their work. Major crafts fairs take place in July and December. The latter fair, largest in the Caribbean, is held across the bay from Old San Juan at the Bacardi Rum factory. Makers of handmade lace, carved saints, and the small Puerto Rican guitars called *guiros* and *quatros* are among the two hundred participating artisans.

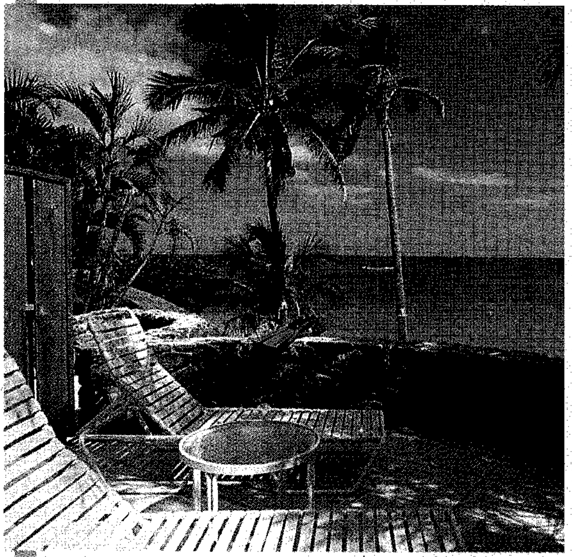
Music lovers still have time to make plans to attend this year's Puerto Rican Heineken Jazz Fest '98 in Sixto Escobar from May 28th-31st. Scheduled performers include Earl Klugh, David Sanborn, and the Ron Carter Trio.



United States Virgin Islands

Engage in an Ecotour

While golfers like President Clinton (who spent New Year's with his family on St. Thomas) head for the links, other visitors pursue rugged adventures here. Led by marine biologists and naturalists, kayakers can visit Cas Cay Mangrove Lagoon and St. James Marine Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary. According to Virgin Islands Ecotours, based in St. Thomas, no experience is needed to use the easy-to-maneuver ocean kayaks.



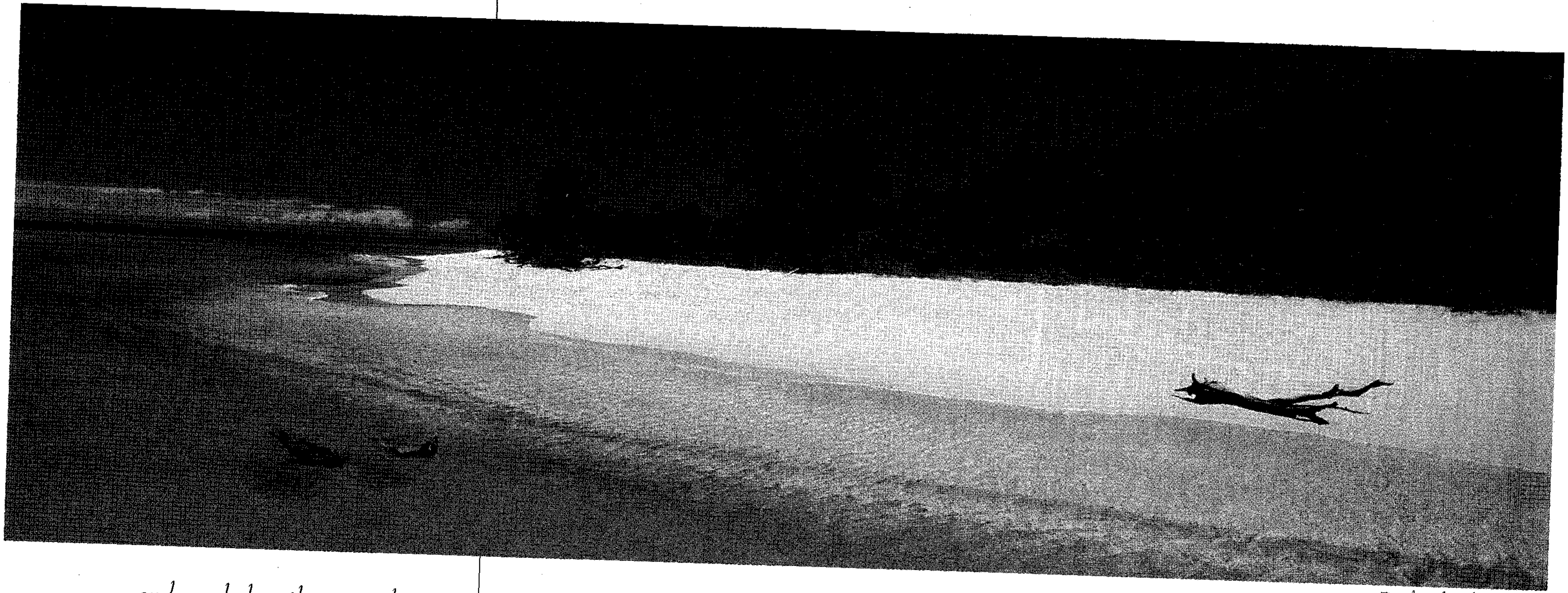
You can also practice your paddling at the newly renovated Pavilions & Pools Hotel in St. Thomas, where twenty-five one-bedroom villas each come with a private swimming pool. Pavilions & Pools is located just a mile from the ferry to tiny St. John, where Carolina Corral offers horse and donkey tours through the Virgin Islands National Park. Trekkers can follow the area's twenty-two hiking trails, including three-mile Reef Bay Trail, which meanders past ancient Awawak Indian petroglyphs.

Snorkelers at St. Croix's beachfront Tamarind Reef Hotel can view sea fans, anemones, and a resident octopus named Oscar who makes his home in the resort's namesake reef. For a change of underseas scenery, guests can hop a boat for the three-mile trip to Buck Island Underwater National Park. A marked snorkel trail points the way to protected coral formations in an especially vibrant aquatic setting.

St. Croix Bike and Tours offers guided trips around the island's west end, and rentals are available for bikers who want to explore the island on their own. Horseback riders can take a guided tour of the tropical rain forest and rolling countryside, or fulfill the romantic fantasy of riding on a white-sand beach.

Top, "Snuba" St. John's underwater coral reefs, photo courtesy of the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Tourism; *middle*, courtesy of The Buccaneer in St. Croix

Go horseback riding through
a rainforest in St. Croix, shop tax-free



Buck Island, St. Croix

and snorkel on the same day in
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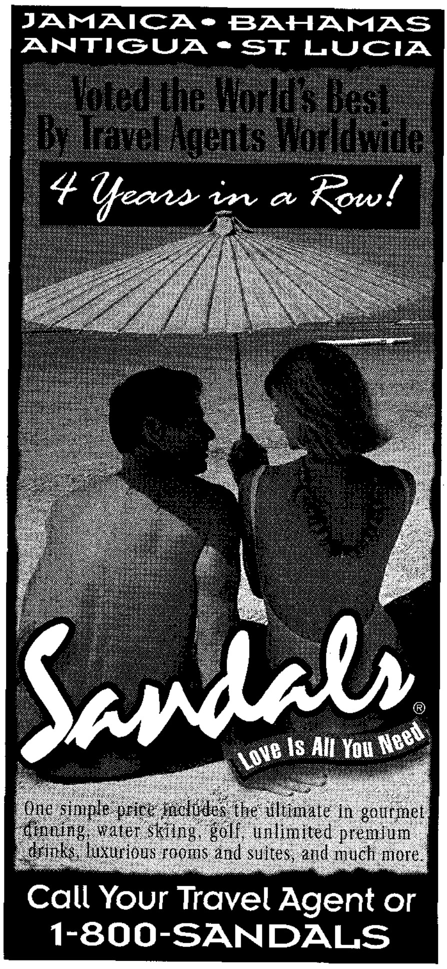
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Start to Slalom Water-ski

Those ready to take the plunge and become single-ski water-skiers can learn how aboard the Yacht Taboo, a two-million-dollar, eighty-five-foot schooner that accommodates groups of five couples. Captain David Hartstone and his crew of three are headquartered in St. Thomas, and they sail the schooner to secluded spots like the reefs off tiny Anegada Island in the British Virgin Islands. The crew teaches the intrepid how to ski on one wide ski; guides scuba divers to underwater wrecks; and directs guests to a magnificent lobster feast on the beach of Anegada Island.

Buy Your Way Out

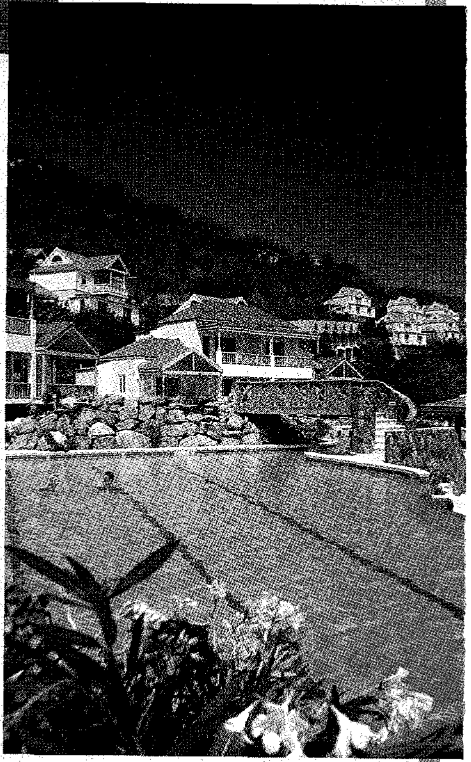
Since the U.S.V.I. has twice the duty-free exemption of other Caribbean islands ($1,200), bargain-hunters in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas' capital, can amass quite a bit of booty. The spoils are stashed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century warehouses that have been converted to shops selling perfumes, leather goods, cameras, and fine jewelry.

The pursuit of pleasure needn't end there. The Buccaneer on St. Croix, which half a century ago was an eleven-room inn that arranged wild boar hunts, has now grown to a 150-room destination resort with a shopping arcade, water sports center, spa, four restaurants, and three beaches. Instead of wild boar, guests now hunt for stray golf balls in the lily ponds and sand traps of its championship, eighteen-hole golf course.

British Virgin Islands

Find a Swimmer's Haven

At Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, the new 130-foot pool with swim-up bar and water slide may keep visitors from the sea—but not for long. Set on a fifty-two acre hillside overlooking a mile-long stretch of sand, the resort's beachfront cabanas, which sit on stilts near the water's edge, each come equipped with a hammock from which to survey the beach below.

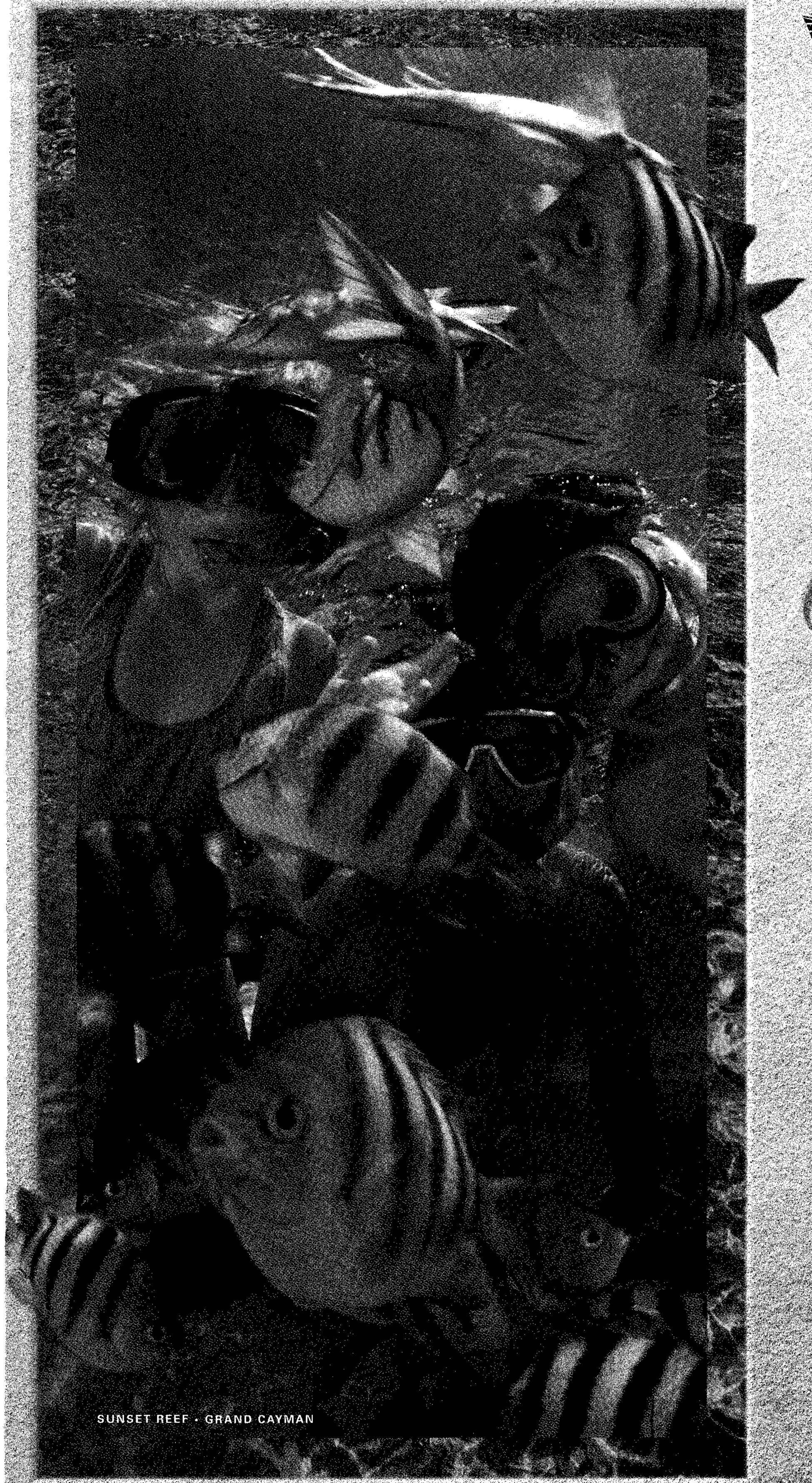


If you insist on rousing yourself, Nature's Secret Adventure Company can arrange for guests to sea kayak; take a historic or nature tour; hike through a rain forest; explore coves; ride horseback; or sail to nearby islands to scuba dive among well-preserved shipwrecks.

Sample Fine Wines

Chosen as a best place to stay in the world by a leading travel publication, Peter Island Resort recently became even better, having undergone major

Top, courtesy of Peter Island Resort; *middle*, Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas, Tortola, B.V.I.



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Take a trip to Stingray City and interact with docile, friendly rays with puppydog personalities, in their natural environment. Visit our Turtle Farm where children can discover everything from a tiny hatchling just a few inches long to a 600lb. turtle, or try a glass bottom boat trip if you're afraid of getting those little feet wet.

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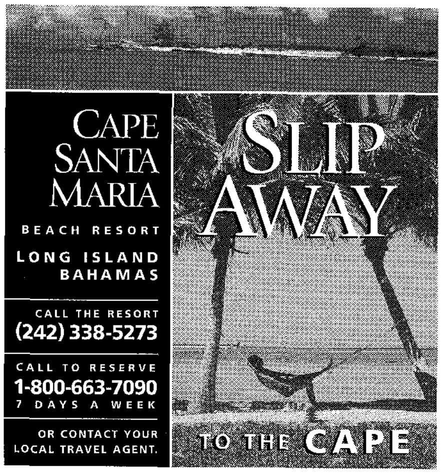
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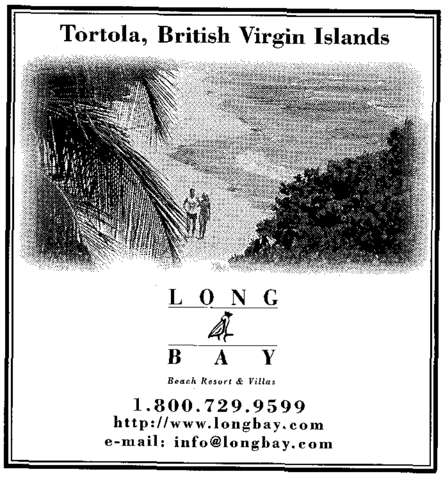
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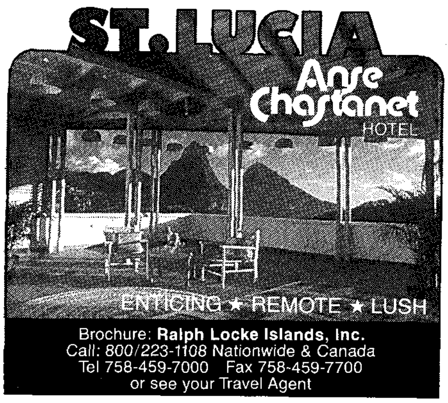
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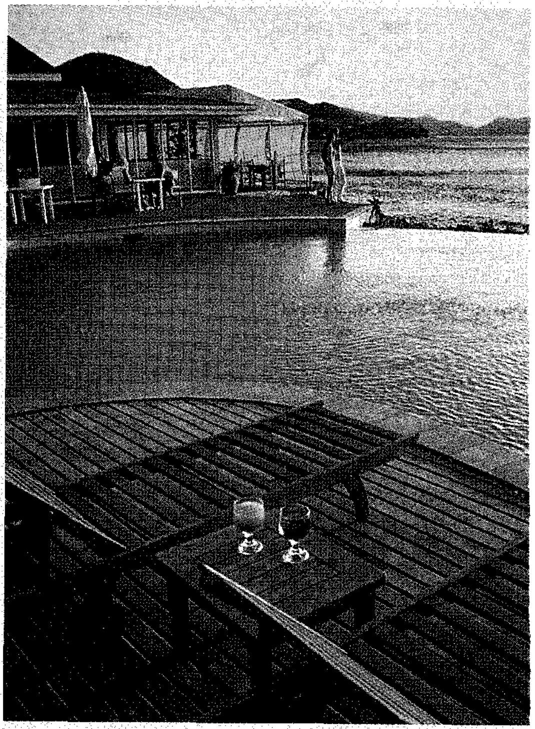
renovations before reopening in December. Located on a private island that's the largest in the British Virgin Islands, this fifty-two room luxury resort enables guests to increase their knowledge of fine vintages through a weekly wine tasting conducted by Commander Sommelier Franchette Cotton. The event is followed by a multicourse dinner at the Tradewinds restaurant. Resort cuisine—such as the chef's signature dish of conch ravioli—complements selected wines.



St. Barthélemy

Graze Like a Gourmet

Preparations are already underway on St. Barts for the island's Gastronomique Festival, but there's still time to make plans to attend. From May 1st-10th, the wine and culture of a different French region is the focus each day. Chefs at participating restaurants will present the cuisine—including cheeses, breads, liqueurs, and wines—from Provence, the Loire Valley, Beaujolais, and other areas.

Built into a hillside overlooking the sea, the Christopher Hotel offers a five-night package that includes a deluxe accommodation with continental breakfast served on a private terrace, a car for daily excursions, and a full-day sailing trip with a French buffet lunch. Festival dinners, which rotate from hotel to hotel, are discounted. The Christopher's expansive swimming pool and well-equipped fitness center keep guests in "fighting" shape.

Antigua

Lucky Break

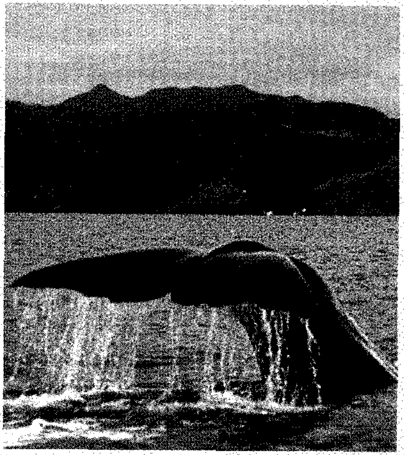
Antigua isn't the only island in the Caribbean with gambling, but it may be one of the most fun. Hosts at the sparkling new Mango Bay Hotel & Beach Club can arrange transportation to King's Casino in St. John's, where you can try your luck at blackjack, roulette, and the slot machines.

But you may be reluctant to leave the lush lagoon next to the hotel or nearby Lover's Beach, where a limestone outcropping called Devil's Bridge has been chiseled by the waves. Vacation Travel Mart offers a three-night package to Mango Bay (a fourth night is free if you can't tear yourself away) that includes airfare, room, meals, and a catamaran snorkeling adventure to nearby Green Island.

Dominica

Watch Out for Whales

Located between Guadeloupe and Martinique, Dominica's waters have become a magnet for migrating whale



Top: Christopher Hotel—St. Barts © Wynn/Sibeck; sperm whales that can be found off Dominica populations. Whale-watching boats are outfitted with hydrophones that let passengers hear the singing of humpbacks and rare sperm whales before they emerge from the calm deep. The best time of the year for cetacean-spotting is November through March.

Competitive types ought to pencil in July 3rd-11th on their calendar. That's when Dominica's annual Dive Fest takes place, complete with underwater treasure hunts, canoe and swimming races, and evening parties that celebrate "The Nature Island of The Caribbean."

Martinique

Reach New Heights

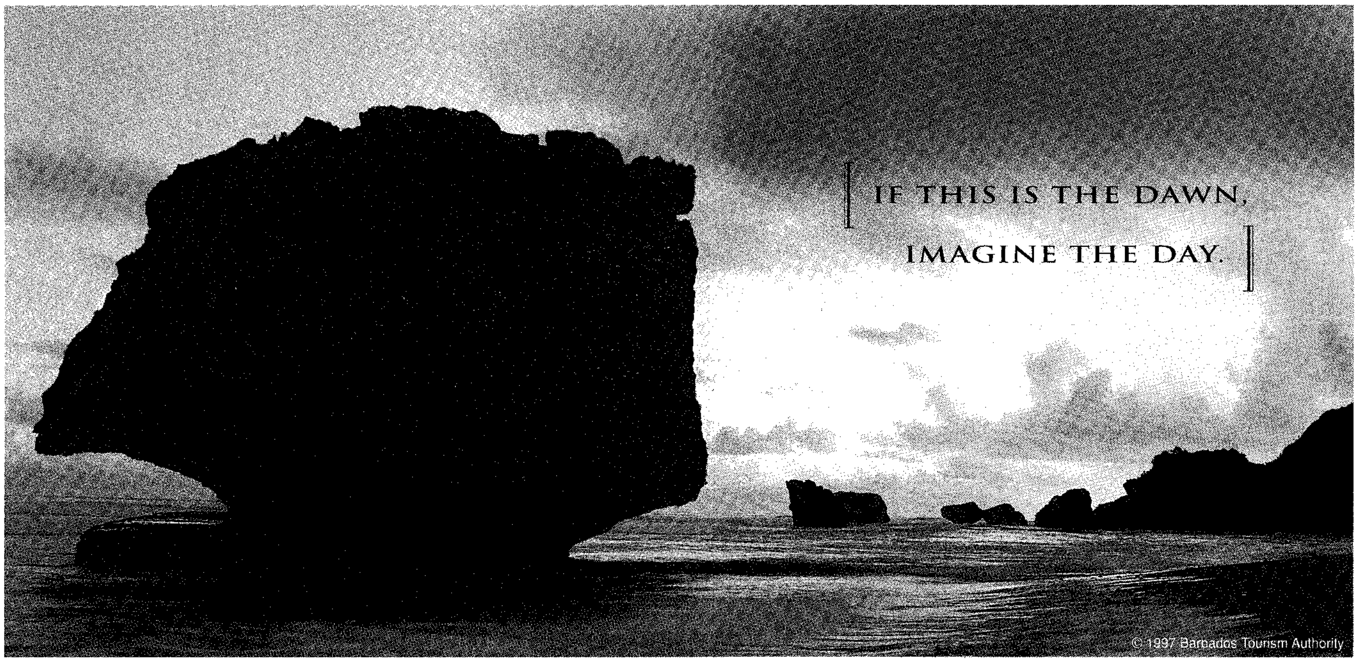
Serious adventurers can pursue a peak experience on Martinique's 4,583-foot Mont Pelée, a mist-covered volcano that had a major eruption in 1902. Today it's closely monitored, and hikers can choose from three trails to reach the summit. The challenging southern path, steep at first, plateaus along the rim. On a clear day, views stretch from St. Pierre on the Caribbean coast to the Atlantic. Farther up, one can look into the volcano's once steaming core, now carpeted with moss, ferns, and bromeliads.

St. Lucia

Soak in Sulphur Springs

Travelers to St. Lucia will find there's more to this island than scenic fishing villages, old plantations, colonial garrisons, and the sandy white beaches on its leeward shore. Sulphur Springs is home to a volcanic crater about a mile in circumference that visitors can drive to and tour. From there, a series of six falls totalling eighteen-hundred feet ends with Diamond Falls, which sends water splashing into the volcanic pool below. Just downstream is a uniquely relaxing spot built during the reign of Louis XVI, known as Diamond Mineral Baths, where you can bask in the revitalizing hot springs.

Sandals in St. Lucia



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Take to the Beach

If you like your water from the sea, the Anse Chastanet resort borders St. Lucia's best natural beach. Some balconies and bathrooms wrap around living trees, and entire walls open onto verandas and to what's been called the most riveting view in the Caribbean. Anse Chastanet offers guests a guided snorkeling trip as well as a package that includes a dive course for two.

Barbados

Taste the Local Delicacies

Barbados is one of the lushest—and most luscious—spots in the Caribbean. Throughout the island, chefs (many of whom have perfected their art overseas) use ripe local fruits and vegetables and freshly caught fish to create inimitable Bajan cuisine. Native flying fish are as delicious cooked at a beachside café as at an exclusive restaurant.

To savor an array of local dishes, fill your plate at Glitter Bay resort's Friday night buffet. Tiny, succulent lobster tails, gently spiced pumpkin fritters, cornmeal-and-okra, cou-cou, green papaya slaw, and other regional dishes are presented. Stay for the Caribbean show afterwards, a joyous explosion of music and dance with a stilt-walker, fire-eater, and gravity-defying limbo dancer.

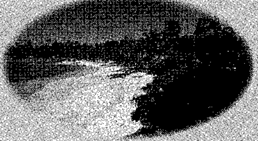
There's even more revelry during the annual Crop Over festival (June 28th through August 3rd), an exuberant celebration that marks the end of the sugar cane harvest. Fairs, tastings, concerts, calypso competitions, parades, and other Mardi Gras-like activities take place during this event, the year's biggest.

Try a Change of Place

Go off the beaten track to experience the unspoiled tropical havens. Small Hotels of the Caribbean is a consortium of inns, beach cottages, villas, condos, guest houses, and hotels that each have fewer than a hundred rooms. Barbados' Crane Beach Hotel, set on a dramatic promontory, is one extraordinary member. Many are operated by innkeeper families, who can make an ordinary vacation feel like a intimate stay with friends—friends who just happen to supervise all of the cooking and own the place, that is. Thanks to an arrangement with American Airlines, visitors to these properties pay airfare as low as those who buy package vacations at megahotels.

Island Hideaways lists hundreds of Caribbean villas on its website, where visitors can find information on renting everything from a small cottage to a palatial estate. Many properties are on the beach or have a private swimming

Middle, Bajan sunset and *bottom*, island flora



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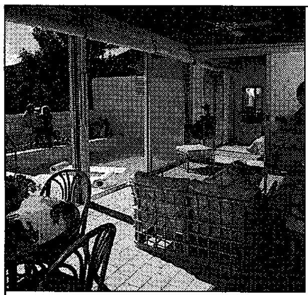

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pool; some offer both, along with the services of a cook and maid.

St. Vincent & The Grenadines

Learn to Windsurf

If you've ever imagined yourself gliding over calm waters, holding a sail sheet with confidence, this is the place to learn; those perilous jet skis with their death-defying riders are strictly outlawed. You may think you're in Tahiti in this thirty-two island chain where aquamarine and emerald waters merge and the shores are dotted with colorful cottages. There is no night life to speak of, and the islands cater to those who are serious about water sports.

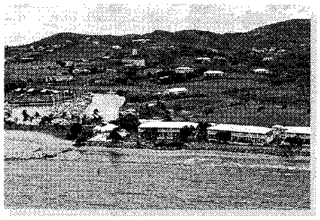
Mozart himself couldn't have wished for a lovelier place to perform than at the Mustique Summer Arts Festival (July 30th-August 1st). The highlight of the event is a series of chamber-music concerts held at private villas and in the plantation-style hotel, Cotton House, on this French West Indies isle.

Trinidad and Tobago

Come to Nest

The southernmost Caribbean islands, Trinidad and Tobago, are a naturalist's paradise. Giant leatherback turtles up to six feet long nest on these sandy shores from March through September. You can learn more about this protected species on Tobago by joining a guided turtle-watching group.

Members of the human species can find a most comfortable spot to nest at the recently opened Coco Reef Resort & Spa in Tobago. You'll be met by a profusion of deep yellow, tropical *pouii* that grow inside the vast open-air lobby. Indulge in an elegant dinner under the roof cone of Tamara's, built so that every table has ringside, sea-view seating. The resort is surrounded



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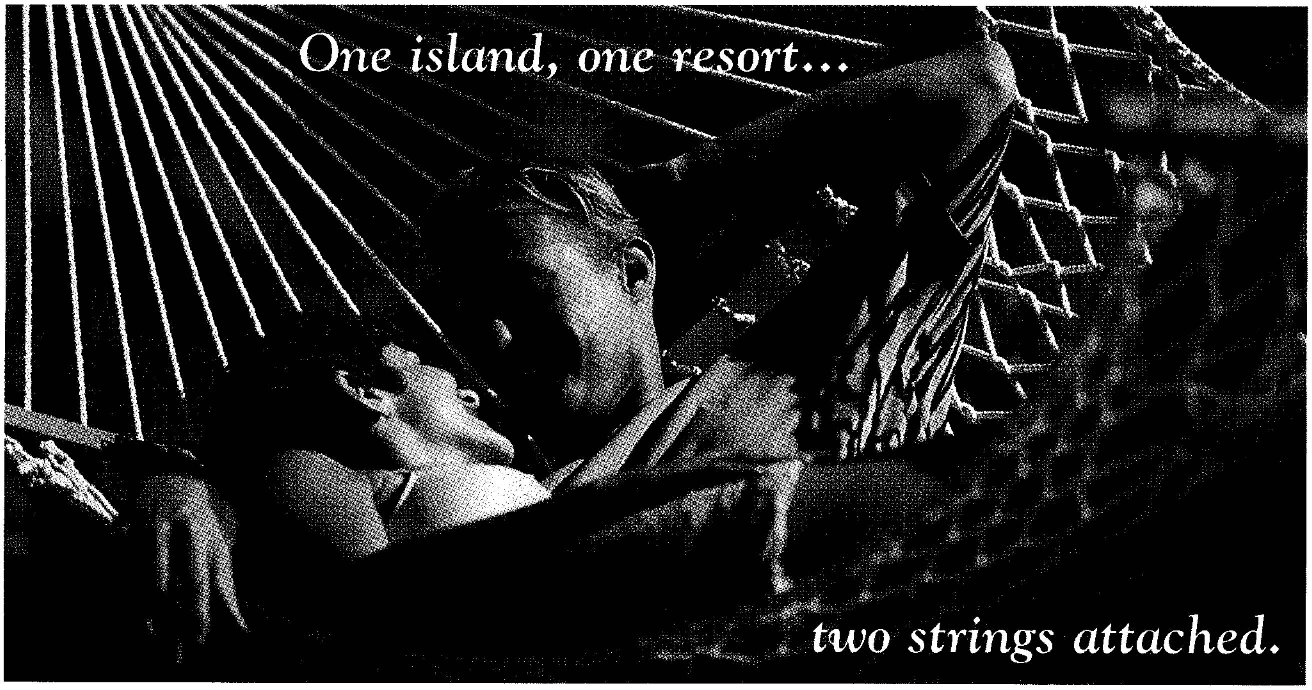
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by three beaches including one of the island's most beautiful, Pigeon Beach, and its Coco Spa offers a variety of treatments to help guests avoid the leathery countenance of those treasured turtles.

Aruba

Charter a Catamaran

Imagine yourself skimming across Aruba's aquatic playground on a fifty-three-foot catamaran, catching the tradewinds in your sails. Or maybe you'd prefer to paddle through the seas in a banana boat, or submerge deep below the surface in The Atlantis submarine to inspect the coral cliffs. Staff at the modern and eco-friendly Bucuti Beach Resort can arrange charter trips that include a vessel, equipment, and crew; fresh island fare and drinks enhance the journey. Trips of every variety on land or sea including horseback riding, golf, and island tours also await its guests.

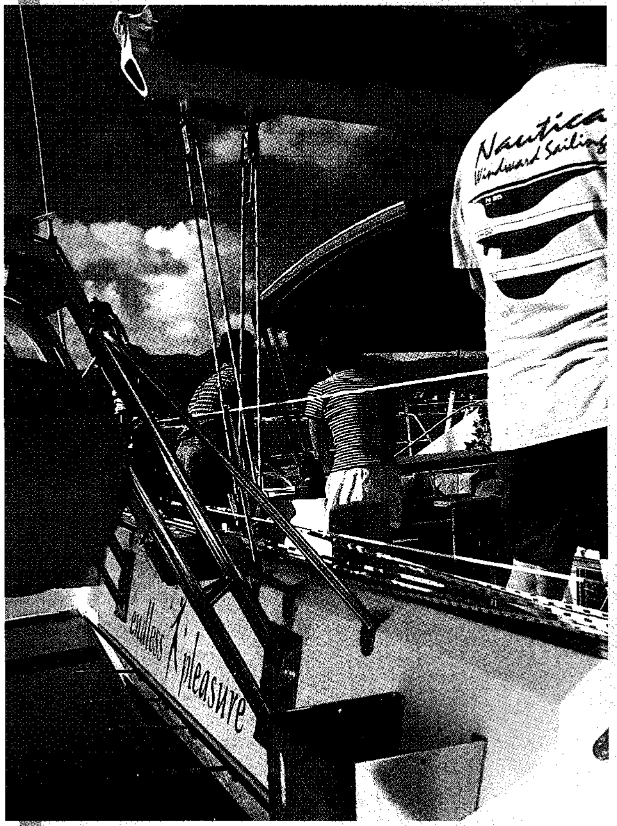
Throw Off the Bowlines

Be a High-Seas Hedonist

If seeing the Caribbean on a big, luxurious ship is your idea of heaven, consider The Mercury—recently launched as part of Celebrity Cruises' five-ship fleet. This opulent sea resort has everything an epicurean could want: champagne-and-caviar bar, cigar club, piano lounge equipped with telescopes, penthouse suites with butler service, interactive televisions in all staterooms, and an elaborate spa. From October 18, 1998 through April 25, 1999, she sails seven-night Western Caribbean cruises that depart from Fort Lauderdale every Sunday and call at Key West, Calica and Cozumel in Mexico, and Grand Cayman Island.

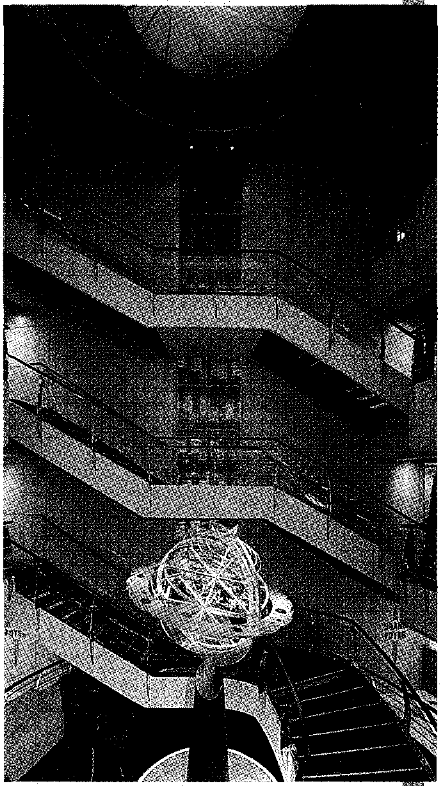
Chart Your Own Course

Surely one way to attain sheer bliss would be to charter a customized Caribbean yacht and sail the high seas at your own whim. Whether you plan to travel as a couple, with the family, or with a group of friends, Port Yacht Charters can recommend a yacht of suitable size. Voyages can be of



Top: the Great Room at the Cotton House in Mustique. *Bottom:* courtesy of Port Yacht Charters any duration, with plenty of stops to swim, snorkel, scuba dive, relax on a beach, or explore different islands. When evening is nigh, put in at a nearby port and head for a beachside tavern where you can take in a local band, dance in the sand, and toast the starry night with a cold Red Stripe in hand.

(Susan Breslow Sardone is a travel journalist who has visited the Caribbean extensively on assignment. She also maintains a website for romantic journeys at http://honeymoons.miningco.com.)



Research Your Next Vacation

To learn more about tropical resorts and the adventures that await you, call 800-356-9999 ext. 631, for a copy of "The Caribbean Where to Go." Covering twenty-seven destinations, it's a free 220-page vacation planner from the Caribbean Coalition for Tourism.

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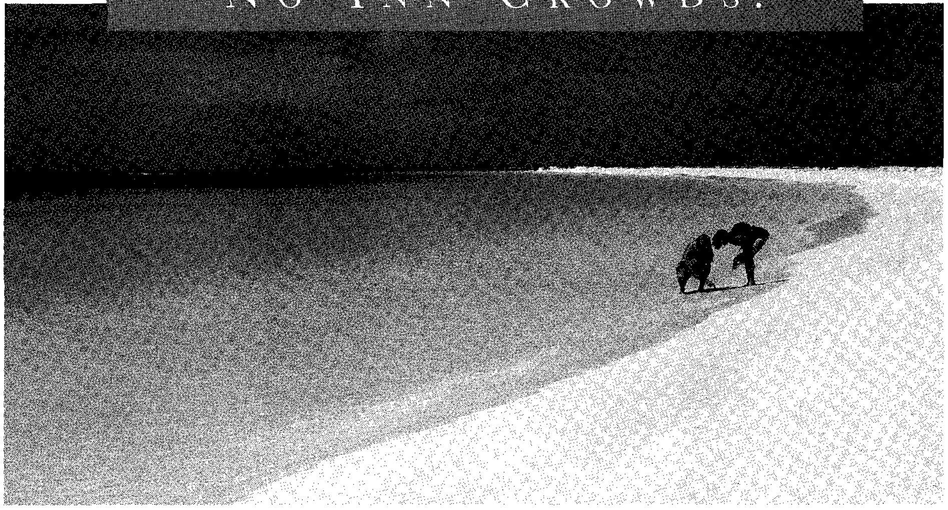

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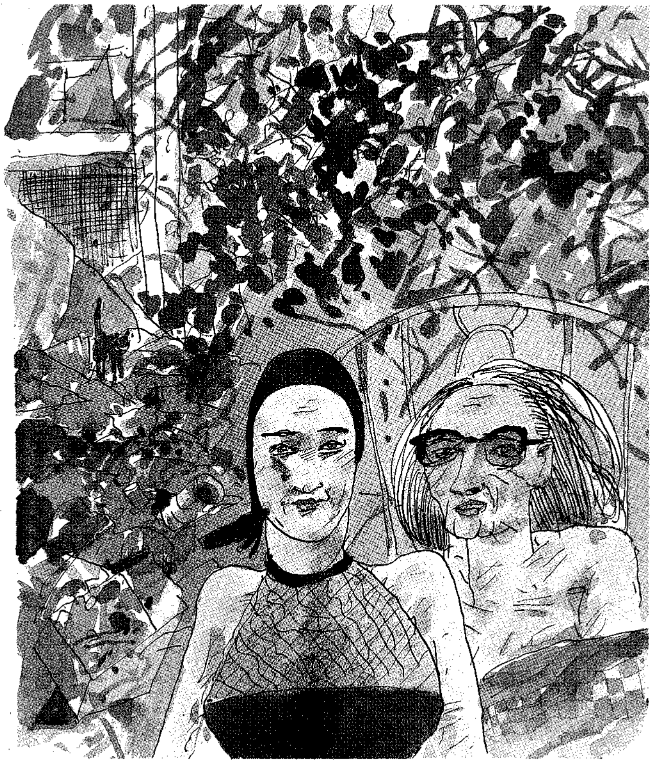

Edie and Edith Bouvier Beale in "Grey Gardens."

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

two of them enjoy a last, almost wordless idyll. No one but Kitano would have thought to combine cold spasms of violence with such a tender portrait of marriage. In Japanese. —*AnthonyLane* (3/30/98) (Film Forum.)

Good Will Hunting—Matt Damon plays a belligerent working-class genius from South Boston who's been abused in foster homes and is now being given a chance to triumph over his past; Robin Williams is the maverick shrink who helps him understand his demons; and Minnie Driver is the unsnobbish Harvard girlfriend who tries to heal him with acceptance. If it sounds treacly, it's not, thanks to a honed script (co-written by Damon and Ben Affleck, who plays Damon's best pal), subtle performances, and surprisingly warm direction by Gus Van Sant.—*D.M.* (1/19/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Grease (1978)—At a distance of two decades, what stands out about this phenomenally successful tribute to adolescent horniness? Randal Kleiser's direction looks slow and clunky, the jokes are obvious, the dialogue is boring, and the notion that a woman is either a virgin or a whore is retrograde. But the songs are still occasions for witty, efficient character turns, and John Travolta does his Elvis parody with a crazy conviction that no screen dancer topped until Travolta outdid himself in "Pulp Fiction." Other charms include Stockard Channing's rowdy, physical performance as Rizzo, the slut, and Eve Arden as—what else?—the affectionately knowing school principal.—*Sarah Kerr* (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Guild; through April 16.)

I Think I Do—A romantic comedy about the loves of six former college roommates. Written and directed by Brian Sloan. (Quad Cinema.)

Junk Mail—Pål Sletaune's dark comedy about an Oslo postman who takes an unusual interest in the mail he carries and in one of the customers on his route. In Norwegian. (Quad Cinema and 62nd & Broadway.)

Knife in the Water (1961)—Roman Polanski made this film when he was twenty-eight, but it has the low-key wryness and technical assurance you expect from directors twice as old. This nerve-wracking fusion of psychological drama and unromantic comedy unfolds mostly during a daylong sailboat journey. When a bullying, well-off husband (Leon Niemczyk) and his voluptuous bikini-clad wife (Jolanta Umecka) take on a student (Zygmunt Malanowicz) as a deckhand, sexual tension adds fire to built-in class jealousies. But "Knife" doesn't become merely a triangle movie. It's about three people trying to transcend a shrivelling recognition of their limitations. Shortly before the wife and the student have sex, she tells him, "You're just the same. Only younger by half, weaker, and twice as stupid." Polanski maintains an ultra-cool tone; *no one* leaves the water unscathed. The script is by Polanski and Jerzy Skolimowski. In Polish.—*Michael Sragow* (Symphony Space; April 21.)

L.A. Confidential—Curtis Hanson's thriller, set in Los Angeles in the early fifties, is about a group of cops who between them cover the full moral range, from the uptight integrity of Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) to the four-star sadism of Bud White (Russell Crowe). The plot, adapted from the James Ellroy novel, is both murky and tangled, yet the movie never bogs down. Hanson paces the tale with ease, decorating it with one neat performance after another: James Cromwell as the smiling police chief, David Strathairn as an oily pimp, Kim Basinger as one of his prize charges, and, best of all, Kevin Spacey as a "celebrity crime-stopper" who gets dragged into the dark and dirty.—*A.L.* (9/22/97) (84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, and 19th Street East 6.)

Little Dieter Needs to Fly—Werner Herzog's documentary about Dieter Dengler. (Film Forum.)

Lost in Space—An adventure in space about the Robinson family, their sabotaged craft, and their efforts to get back to earth, based on the sixties television show. With Gary Oldman, William Hurt, Matt LeBlanc, and Mimi Rogers; directed by Stephen Hopkins. (Astor Plaza, Cinema I, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Love and Death on Long Island—A mischievous, surprising film about unlikely romantic pursuit. John Hurt is a British author of highbrow novels who lives in reclusive Luddite splendor until he is smitten with a teen-flick heartthrob (Jason Priestley). One of the many ways in which the film subverts our expectations is by refusing to condescend to its central character; we come to see the lovesick novelist as half stalker, half *poète maudit*, transfigured by romantic greatness. Directed by Richard Kwietniowski, the movie is less about the nature of homoerotic longing than about the closeted nature of love itself.—*D.M.* (3/9/98) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sutton.)

Loves of a Blonde (1965)—A dreamily romantic young girl who is adrift in her regimented, Socialist factory milieu mistakes the casual interest of a young musician for a serious interest, and follows him to his home. The Milos Forman film is a comedy, and yet it's too painful and desolate to be funny. With Hana Brejchova and Vladimir Pucholt. In Czech.—*P.K.* (Symphony Space; April 21.)

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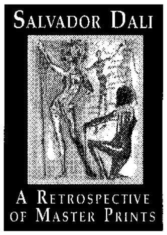

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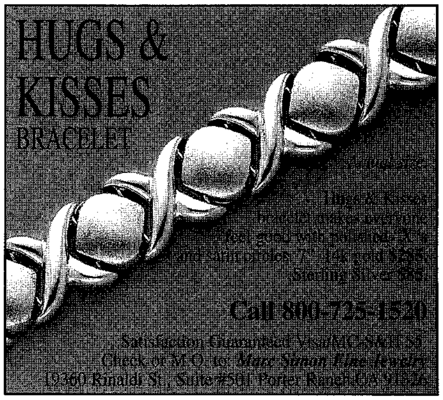

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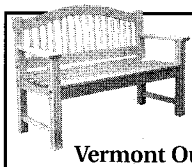

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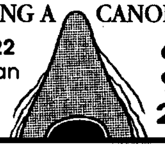

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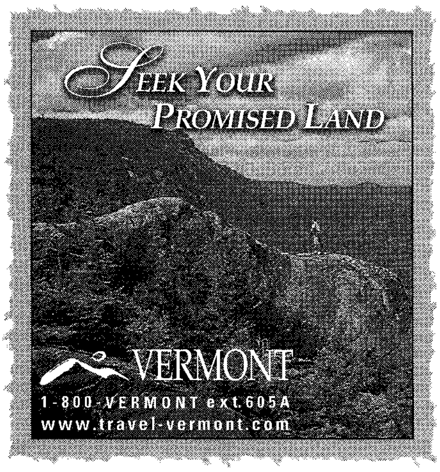
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Mercury Rising—A thriller, directed by Harold Becker, about an ex-F.B.I. agent (Bruce Willis) who protects a nine-year-old autistic savant from assassins. Also with Alec Baldwin. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

My Giant—A comedy starring Billy Crystal as a talent agent who hopes to make it to the big time when he meets a seven-foot-seven man (Gheorghe Muresan). Directed by Michael Lehmann. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II—The comic adventures of former roommates Felix (Jack Lemmon) and Oscar (Walter Matthau), who meet in California on the way to their children's wedding. Directed by Howard Deutch. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Embassy 3, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The Players Club—A drama about the lives of the men and women who work in a strip club, in this début film by writer-director Ice Cube. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

A Price Above Rubies—Renée Zellweger looks alternately bewildered and pouty in her role as the wife of an ultra-Orthodox scholar (Glenn Fitzgerald) who treats marital sex as an indecent diversion from his spiritual duties. The claustrophobic feel of the couple's Borough Park community is effectively rendered, but the movie's emotional tone wobbles confusingly between magic realism and poorly nuanced character study. Still, there's the kernel of something interesting in this I. B. Singer-like tale of a young woman born into the wrong culture who eventually finds a way to make a new life for herself—replete with a Hispanic lover and unkosher egg rolls. With "ER"'s Julianna Margulies, who is utterly convincing as a proper Hasidic wife and mother. Written and directed by Boaz Yakin.—*D.M.* (Paris and Village East Cinemas.)

Primary Colors—Mike Nichols and Elaine May's adaptation of Joe Klein's best-seller purrs along rather winningly and even manages, in the long run, to weave a sad, thoughtful tale. John Travolta peddles his Clinton imitation softly, and Emma Thompson is convincing as his cool, politically driven wife. Although there's no political depth to May's writing, Nichols has spun a big, brash Hollywood confection that will send audiences home with still more Clintonia to talk about.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

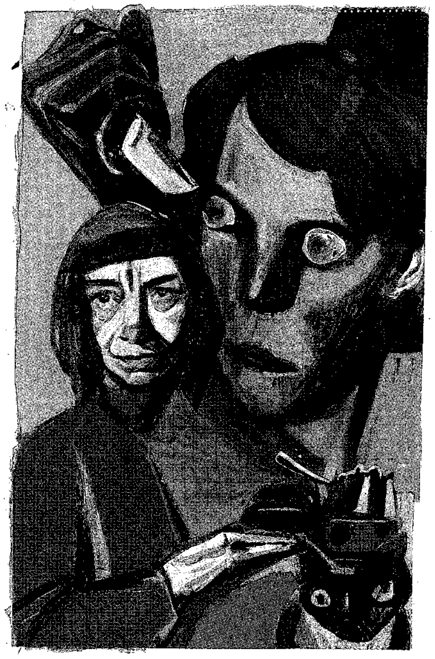
Sonatine—Takeshi Kitano wrote, directed, and stars in this 1994 thriller about an aging gangster on what might be his last assignment. In Japanese. (Angelika Film Center.)

The Spanish Prisoner—A young inventor, Joe (Campbell Scott), dreams up something called "the Process" that is destined to bring untold wealth to his bosses but not to himself. When he airs this grievance to Jimmy Dell (Steve Martin), a businessman whom he meets in the Caribbean, he finds himself enmeshed in a plot from which there is no escape, unless you count the suspiciously loving attentions of Susan (Rebecca Pidgeon), a fellow-employee. This is the fifth movie to be written and directed by David Mamet, and it's his most bizarre one yet; people speak in that dreamy, lock-jawed manner we first heard in "House of Games," and their entire lives appear to be lived under the spell of some nameless paranoia. If you're prepared to ignore the plot's absurdities, the film is addictive, and Carter Burwell's score works on you like a massage. The film also offers the sharpest and most quizzical work that Steve Martin has turned in for some time. With Ben Gazzara, as the snaky Mr. Klein.—*A.L.* (4/13/98) (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Species II—American astronauts bring hostile alien beings to earth, in Peter Medak's science-fiction thriller. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Stolen Moments—A documentary about the history of lesbians in Europe and the United States, directed by Margaret Westcott. (Quad Cinema.)

Taste of Cherry—Abbas Kiarostami's new film follows a prosperous man, Mr. Badii (Homayoun Ershadi, heading up a cast of nonprofessional actors), as he drives through the parched hills around Teheran begging strangers to help bury him once he commits suicide. The film isn't quite the masterpiece some critics are calling it; the sometimes ponderous existentialism seems too closely modelled on European masterpieces of a generation ago, and its ending is too clever by half. But it is a collection of small, scattered miracles. In Farsi.—*S.K.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



At MOMA, a program of films based on novels by Patricia Highsmith.

ANDREA VENTURA

ALSO PLAYING

AFTERGLOW (reviewed in our issue of 1/19/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE APOSTLE** (2/2/98): 59th Street East Cinema and The Screening Room. . . . **BOOGIE NIGHTS** (10/13/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE BORROWERS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **ENTER THE DRAGON:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE FULL MONTY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **GENEALOGIES OF A CRIME:** Quad Cinema. . . . **HARD RAIN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LIVE FLESH** (1/26/98) Cinema 3rd Avenue. . . . **THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK:** Lincoln Square, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MA VIE EN ROSE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **MOUSEHUNT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MRS. DALLOWAY** (2/16/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **NIAGARA, NIAGARA:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **NO LOOKING BACK:** 64th and 2nd. . . . **POST COITUM:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **3 NINJAS: HIGH NOON AT MEGA MOUNTAIN:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **TITANIC** (12/15/97): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **WAG THE DOG** (1/5/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WHO THE HELL IS JULIETTE?:** Cinema Village. . . . **WILD THINGS:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 16: "Point of Order!" (1964, Emile de Antonio and Daniel Talbot)....From April 17: "Grey Gardens" (1976, David and Albert Maysles).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films based on Patricia Highsmith novels and a documentary about her. April 16 at 2:30 and April 18 at 5: "The American Friend" (†)....April 16 at 6 and April 18 at 2: "Edith's Diary" (1983, Hans W. Geissendörfer; in German)....April 17 at 2:30 and April 20 at 6: "Tell Him I Love Him" (1977, Claude Miller; in French)....April 17 at 6 and April 19 at 2: "Strangers on a Train" (1951, Alfred Hitchcock)....April 17 at 8 and April 21 at 6: "Patricia Highsmith" (1995, Philippe Kohly)....April 19 at 5 and April 21 at 6: "The Glass Cell" (1977, Geissendörfer; in German)....April 20 at 2:30: "Deep Water" (1981, Michel Deville; in French)....¶ April 16 at 6: "Kitch's Last Meal" (1973), directed by Carolee Schneemann, one program in a series about the history of 8-mm. films and videos in the United States....¶ April 16 at 6: "L'Inhumaine" (1923, Marcel L'Herbier; a silent French film)....¶ April 17 at 8: "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (1956, Don Siegel)....¶ April 19 at 2: "Dreams That Money Can Buy" (1947, Hans Richter).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films from Africa. April 15 at 2 and 7 and April 18 at 9:30: "Fools" (1997, Ramadan Suleman; South Africa)....April 15 at 4:15 and 9:15 and April 17 at 10: "Gypsy Cab" (1996, Jean-Marie Teno; Cameroon)....April 16 at 2 and 6 and April 18 at 5:30: "Scrap Heap" (1997, Moussa Sene Absa; Senegal)....April 16 at 4 and April 18 at 2: "Tree of Blood' (1996, Flora Gomes; Guinea-Bissau)....April 16 at 7:45: "Mossane" (1996, Safi Faye; Senegal)....April 16 at 9:45: "Love Brewed in an African Pot" (1980, Kwah Anash; Ghana)....April 17 at 2 and 6 and April 18 at 3:45: "Skirt Power" (1997, Adama Drabo; Mali)....April 17 at 4, April 18 at 7:30, April 20 at 9, and April 21 at 2: "Kini and Adams" (1997, Idrissa Ouedraogo; Burkina Faso)....April 17 at 8 and April 21 at 4: "The Last Picture" (1997, Farai Sevenzo; Zimbabwe), "So Be It" (1997, Joseph Gai Ramaka; Senegal), and "The Homecoming" (1997, Richard Pakleppa; Namibia)....April 19 at 2: Three short films by Jean-Marie Teno....April 19 at 4 and April 20 at 2: "Africa, I Will Fleece You" (1992, Teno; Cameroon)....April 19 at 6:15: "Sango" (1997, Obafemi Bandele Lasode; Nigeria)....April 19 at 9:30 and April 20 at 4:15: "When the Stars Meet the Sea" (1996, Raymond Rajaonarivelo; Madagascar).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—April 18 at 2: "Linda" (1928, Dorothy Davenport; silent)....April 18 at 4:30: "The Red Kimona" (1925, Davenport; silent)....April 19 at 2: "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1920, Germaine Dulac; silent)....April 19 at 4:30: "Maternité" (1929, Marie Epstein and Jean Benoît-Lévy).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 21 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Mother and the Whore" (1973, Jean Eustache; in French).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of films that have won or been nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. April 21 at 7: "Loves of a Blonde" (†)....April 21 at 8:45: "Knife in the Water" (†).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). April 19 at 7, the feature will be "Daughters of Darkness" (1971, Herry Kumel).

The Polo Ralph Lauren New Works Festival of Columbia University Filmmakers—More than forty films and videos by students in Columbia University's Graduate Film Division will be shown through April 18, at various venues, including DGA Theatre (110 W. 57th St.) and Columbia University's Dodge Hall (Broadway at 116th St.). (For schedule information, call 854-2815.)

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through April 30: "Gideon's Trumpet" (1980, Robert Collins). (Showings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2 and 4; Thursdays and Fridays at 2, 4, and 6.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—April 15-17 at 7, April 18 at 9:30, and April 19 at 10:15: "A Forgotten Light" (1996, Vladimir Michalek; in Czech)....April 15-17 at 9, April 18 at 7:20, and April 19-21 at 8: "Pereira Declares" (1995, Roberto Faenza; in Italian)....April 16 at 7 and 9, April 17 at 10, April 18 at 6, and April 19 at 4 and 8: "R.I.P.—Rest in Pieces: A Portrait of Joe Coleman" (1997, Robert Pejo)....April 18-19 at 2: "The Diary of a Chambermaid" (†)....April 18-19 at 4: "Valley of Abraham" (1993, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese)....April 18 at 8 and 10 and April 19 at 6 and 10: "Another Sky" (1955, Gavin Lambert).

Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Ave., at 82nd St. (439-8700)—Filmed works of Bertolt Brecht. April 15 at 6:30: "Who Owns the World?" (1932, Slatan Dudov; in German).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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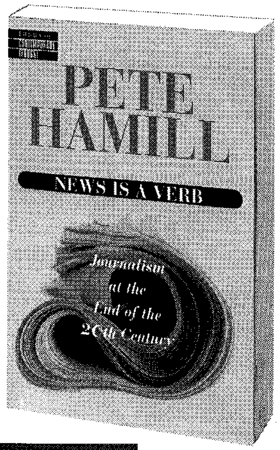
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

SOMEBODY HAD TO SAY IT.

NOW PETE HAMILL DOES.

With the Presidential sex scandal still in full bloom, the question is not *whether* the media have gone insane but *how* and *why.* Now legendary newspaperman, novelist, and screenwriter Pete Hamill dissects the press with the precision of a scalpel and the ferocity of a blowtorch. "Newspapers must be the medium that people believe," he writes. "They don't have to be first. They can even be last. *But they must be right.*"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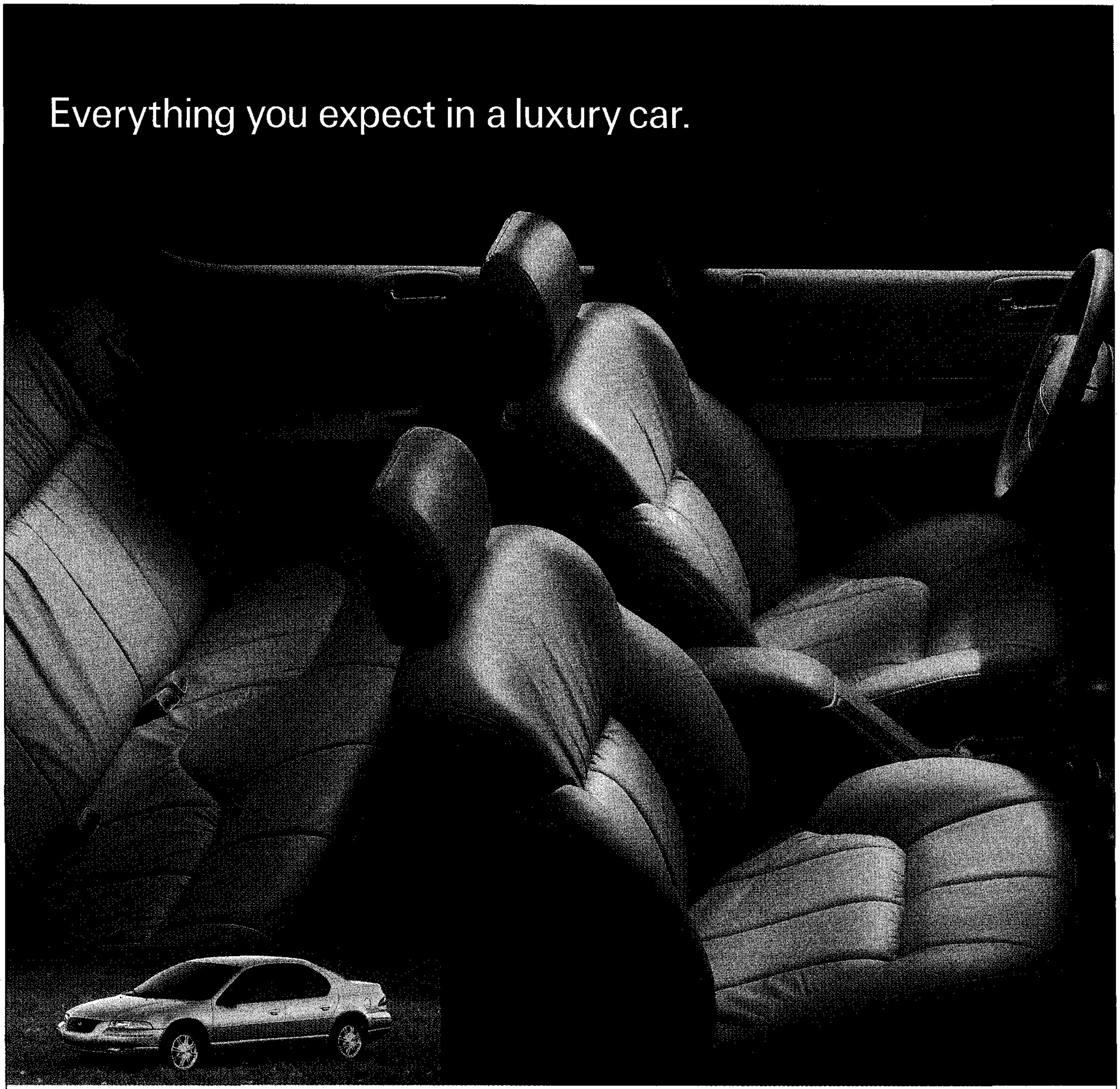

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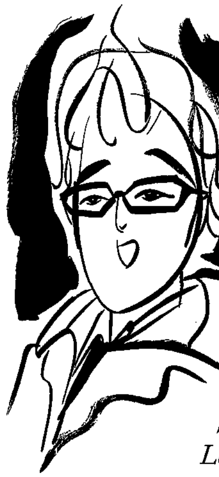
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF LEGACIES

Sean Lennon has a new record—and a theory about his father's murder.

If any members of the audience at Sean Lennon's New York solo rock-and-roll début, at the Mercury Lounge last month, were there out of curiosity to see whether the twenty-two-year-old son of John and Yoko resembles his father, they did not have to look very far for similarities. Not only does Sean have his father's lazy smile but the young Lennon flirted with the audience's expectations with an irony that Dad would have appreciated. "Does anyone out there like the Beach Boys?" he asked at one point. "No one understands the Beach Boys—like, they are the best band of all time."


Sean Lennon

As with sons of music legends both successful (Jakob Dylan, whose latest album has already sold more copies than any of his dad's) and less so (Sean's half brother, Julian, whose career fizzled after a few so-so hits), Sean Lennon is learning the benefits and the drawbacks of trading on the unearned capital of his name. (Should he pose for the magazine *Jane* with his thirty-seven-year-old Japanese girlfriend, Yuka Honda, who is the keyboard player for the band Cibo Matto, or is the Sean-and-Yuka/John-and-Yoko thing too much?) On his début record, "Into the Sun," Lennon has made an effort to acknowledge other musical forefathers: in addition to lilting songs that recall the Beatles, there are excursions into bossa nova, heavy metal, and jazz, and traces of Sean's recent infatuation with Brian Wilson.

"This is a time when a lot of people are making records that are, like, negative and sad, and I just wanted to do the antithesis of that, so I tried to do something that was light and romantic and beautiful and positive," Lennon said the other day, slouching on a sofa in his publicist's office. He wore a Sonic Youth T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers, and had bleached-blond tips to his black hair. "I felt that would be a kind of rebellious thing to do."

Lennon is soft-spoken and somewhat fey, but though sunniness is his chosen musical mode, he seems equally prone to the dark side—combining excited volubility with less circumspection than might be anticipated from someone who has grown up in public. He held forth, with the ardor of the Columbia undergraduate he once was (he lasted a year), on racism, the rain forest, and sexual harassment, and he showed a penchant for government-conspiracy theories, including the argument that John Lennon was killed by the United States government.

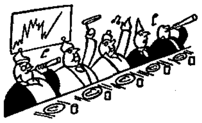
"He was a countercultural revolutionary, and the government takes that kind of shit really seriously historically," Sean said. "He was dangerous to the government. If he had said, 'Bomb the White House tomorrow,' there would have been ten thousand people who would have done it. These pacifist revolutionaries are historically killed by the government, and anybody who thinks that Mark Chapman was just some crazy guy who killed my dad for his personal interests is insane, I think, or very naïve, or hasn't thought about it clearly. It was in the best interests of the United States to have my dad killed, definitely. And, you know, that worked against them, to be honest, because once he died his powers grew. So, I mean, fuck them. They didn't get what they wanted."

As he talked about his father, Sean sounded melancholy, as if he hadn't got what he wanted, either. (John Lennon had been spending more of his time child-rearing than rabble-rousing when he was killed.) After his father's murder, Sean said, he had "as close to a normal childhood as one could have if you were John Lennon's kid: the only thing that was different was that I had two detectives with guns following me everywhere." The Ono household differed in other ways from those of Lennon's Dalton schoolmates. There was no pressure to get into a prestigious college—"My mother was like 'Why are you going to Columbia? Go to fucking N.Y.U. and study art!' "—and intergenerational rock-and-rolling was encouraged: Sean played with his mother on her 1995 album, "Rising." ("I said, 'Mom, let's make some "Plastic Ono Band"-style shit!' ")

Now he wants to be known for his own music. "The more I make my own path, the less people will associate me with my parents," Lennon said, hopefully. "If you go to a high school today and ask kids to tell you the difference between John Lennon and Paul McCartney, they don't even know what band they were in." —Rebecca Mead

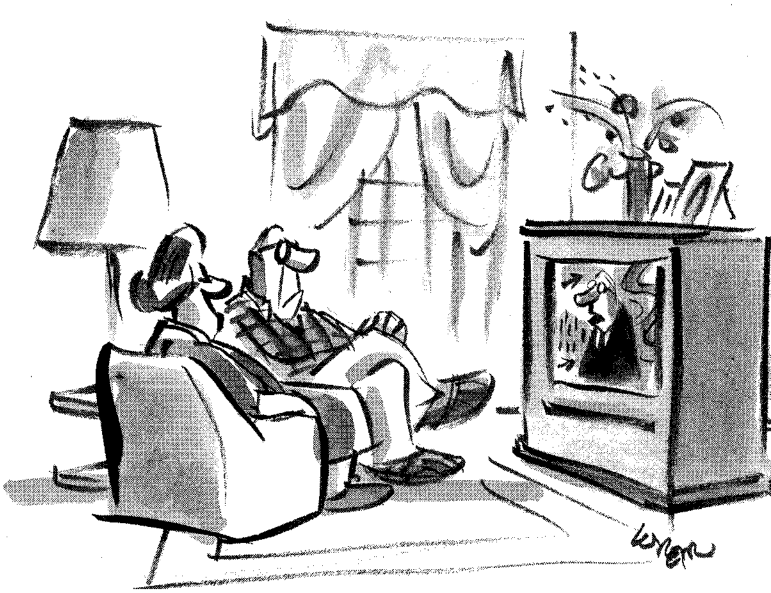
NERD FILE

The high-tech high life that fuels the new schmooze industry.



Esther Dyson is one of those members of the digerati whose rise to prominence has done little to clarify exactly what it is they do for a living. An inventory of her occupational endeavors in-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"Turning to the City Hall forecast, this brief period of contrition will be followed by increasing testiness, leading to major squalls on Monday."

cludes author, newsletter publisher, industry analyst, pundit, venture capitalist, civil-liberties lobbyist, and accumulator of more frequent-flier miles than anyone on earth. In the computer world, though, Dyson is known chiefly as the organizer of PC Forum, an annual event where the high-tech élite gather for a relaxing few days to discuss lofty matters in a swanky hotel ballroom while ducking out regularly into the hallway to throw money at each other.

As the impresario behind PC Forum, Dyson has helped to propel one of the signature innovations of modern capitalism: the commodification of schmooze. Schmooze, of course, has always been with us. What's new is the rise, with the information economy, of a switched-on, plugged-in business class with a seemingly insatiable appetite for talking to itself—and a startling willingness to pay for the privilege.

Dyson's fellow schmooze merchants include Klaus Schwab, the Euro-savvy inventor of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, which is ground zero for geo-economic schmooze; Phil Lader, currently the United States Ambassador in London, and, more significantly, the creator of Renaissance Weekend, which still sets the standard for post-partisan, touchy-feely, slightly Southern-fried schmooze; and Richard Saul Wurman, a Barnumesque kibbitzer with a passion for appalling scarves, whose TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) confabs dominate the market for cultural-industrial schmooze.

Dyson is a cyber-schmooze specialist. Although, as *Newsweek's* Steven Levy remarked, she herself is "a small-talk-free zone," Dyson plays the perfect high-tech hostess. At forty-seven, she is elfin and earnest and apparently ubiquitous, and she has a sharp sense of who needs to be hooked up with whom. "Esther," one C.E.O. said, "is the mother of all yentas."

Dyson, who attends more than a hundred conferences a year, believes that creating the optimal environment for "high-bandwidth" networking is a matter of good planning. Sitting poolside at PC Forum last month, outside Tucson, she revealed her five rules of schmooze:

- *Trap the conferencegoers.* "Put the event in an out-of-the-way city. You can't come to Tucson and call on clients all day. And it's a bear to get here, so once you arrive you're not likely to leave the same day."
- *Own the hotel.* "You want to control most, if not all, of the rooms, so that the hotel is devoted to you. And that way, when you're in the elevator acting stupid, there won't be some poor woman from the nurses' convention thinking that you're being obnoxious."
- *Watch the speeches-to-schmoozing ratio.* "Always make sure there's plenty of time for people to go play golf, or get a drink, or sit by the pool, and not feel they're missing out."
- *Encourage people to bring their families.* "It makes them behave better—they don't get as drunk at night and they don't fool around."
- *Close on a high note.* "Ideally, you want to have Bill Gates as your last speaker, because then everyone will stay to the end."

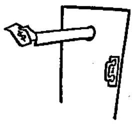
The demand to be one of the six hundred attendees at PC Forum keeps growing, despite a proliferation of high-tech conferences and the fact that Dyson has steadily raised her prices—to almost four thousand dollars a head, not including lodging. "People have tried to bribe their way in," she said.

Dyson attributes the Forum's allure to its speakers, who include not just computer types—such as the Netscape boss Jim Barksdale, Michael Dell, and Intel's new C.E.O., Craig Barrett—but people like the Hollywood agent Jeff Berg, the journalist Steven Brill, and the performance artist Anna Deavere Smith. Dyson sneers at most rival conferences, which focus more on "selling stuff than on new ideas," she said. "You show up at some of these things, and Hewlett-Packard is sponsoring the muffins."

Dyson knows that the Forum plays on the deepest fear of the new business class—being left out of the Next Big Thing. "Paying the price to come to these things is a little like paying protection money," she said. "Whether or not you show up and schmooze, you know that your competitors will. You might not miss anything, but then again you might. And, these days, who can afford to risk that?" —JOHN HEILEMANN

TV LAND

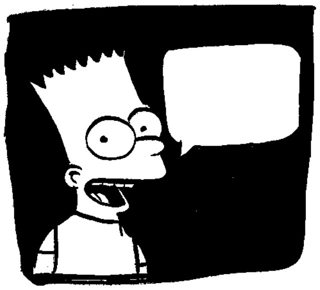
How Bart and Homer Simpson almost lost their voices.



ONE day a couple of weeks ago, in Los Angeles, the six actors who supply the voices for "The Simpsons" were greeted with plastic glasses of champagne by the show's staff on the Twentieth Century Fox lot. The night before, four of the actors—Dan Castellaneta, Yeardley Smith, Harry Shearer, and Hank Azaria—had reached a new contract settlement with Fox after weeks of contentious negotiations.

Only a week earlier, it had looked as if the "Simpsons" actors would walk away. Fox had taken a hard-line stance on their salary demand of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars apiece per episode, and had begun holding auditions to replace them. A Fox executive told one of the actors' representatives, "We could go to any high school in America and find mimics for these voices." Casting agents in five cities were instructed to find Homer Simpson wanna-bes who could convincingly ape Castellaneta's trademark "D'oh!" But the two sides finally reached an agreement, which will pay each actor fifty thousand dollars a week, increasing to sixty thousand next season and seventy thousand the following one; and in the year 2005 each will receive a bonus of a million dollars.

The revolt of the "Simpsons" voices was just the latest financial holdup staged by a group of actors on a valuable television franchise. The networks are feeling beleaguered by huge salary increases that have been paid recently to the casts of "Friends," "E.R.," "Seinfeld," and "Mad About You." But the "Simpsons" dispute was the first mutiny of cartoon characters, and, with the number of animated series growing, its resolution represented an important precedent.



At the core of the dispute was an attempt to financially assess the unique, if invisible, contribution the actors have made. "We have brilliant American humorists in that cast," said James L. Brooks, the "Simpsons" executive producer, who applied pressure behind the scenes to get Fox to settle. As Harry Shearer, who does the voices of Mr. Burns and Smithers, said, "We're virtually the only people left from the start of the show. They've changed animators, they've changed writers. We're the ones who know the characters from the inside out."

Over the years, Fox's frequent boasts about how much money it has made on "The Simpsons" (the show has reportedly earned hundreds of millions of dollars for the network) had created resentment among the cast, who felt that they had not received a fair share of the wealth. Still, in most respects, theirs have been dream jobs, with superb scripts, no worries about hair or wardrobe, and a two-day workweek. "By any real-world standards, this entire discussion is absurd," Shearer admitted. "But we are living in the television world."

One well-known voice actor, Christine Cavanaugh, didn't respond to Fox's casting call for replacements. Cavanaugh, who is known for her work on "Rugrats," viewed reading for "The Simpsons" as the equivalent of crossing a picket line. Her position was understandable, given her own experience: Cavanaugh provided the squeaky voice of the talking pig in the 1995 hit movie "Babe," which grossed two hundred and fifty million dollars around the world. Last year, she was invited back for the "Babe" sequel, "Babe: Pig in the City." Having earned around thirty thousand dollars for "Babe," Cavanaugh asked for a two-hundred-thousand-dollar fee, plus a stake in merchandising. George Miller, the film's director and co-producer, apparently feared that such an increase would raise the price of every other animal in the barnyard. So he replaced her. —Nancy Griffin

FAX FROM LOS ANGELES

The leaf blower displaces Tibet as Hollywood's pet political issue.

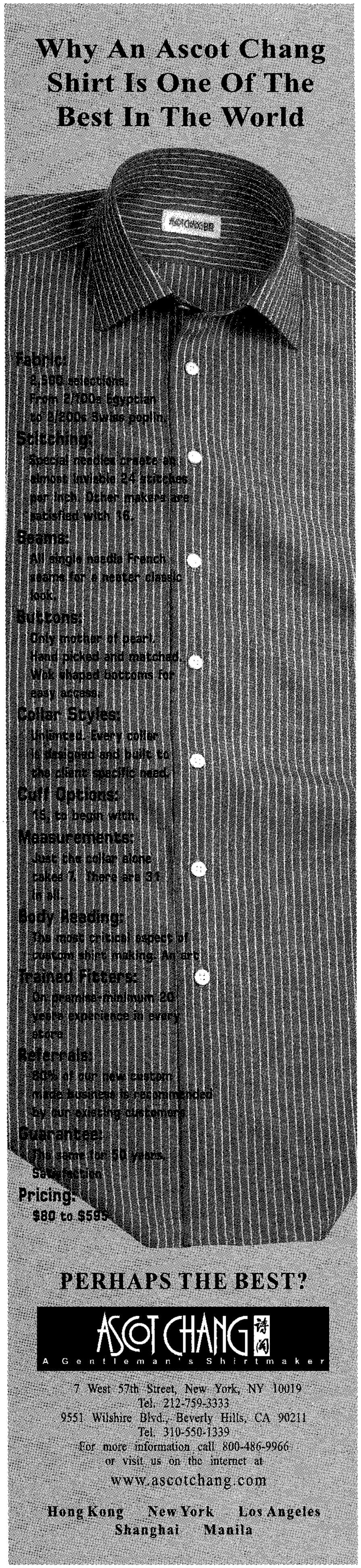
IT was a long, hot winter in the back yards of Los Angeles. A few months ago, after angry gardeners had crowded into City Council hearings and marched barefoot through the streets, came the mother of all lawn-care battles: on the south steps of City Hall, ten gardeners vowed to starve themselves to death if the city's ban on gasoline-powered leaf blowers was not rescinded. The protesters, members of the Association of Latin American Gardeners, a hastily formed and none too ethnically inclusive organization, said that without the machines they faced financial ruin: the time necessary to clean a yard would double. "People don't like to pay more, especially the rich people," said one.

The atmosphere on the steps became more and more reminiscent of a Cesar Chavez campaign for the liberation of migrant farmworkers, as Westside homeowners, including the former television stars Meredith Baxter, Peter Graves, and Julie Newmar, trooped past to testify against the leaf-blower scourge. "It's not the way to treat Mother Earth," Newmar said. "Nobody's lawn has to look like a billiard table." Adrian Alvarez, a spokesman for ALAG, told the Los Angeles *Times*, "This is not a hunger strike about leaf blowers. It's a hunger strike . . . about access to the democratic process."

The leaf blower is an abominable garden tool: it's loud, like a chainsaw going full tilt, and spews as much pollution in one hour as a car driven from New York to Washington, D.C.—it's not unlike having the Harbor Freeway running through your back yard. Julie Newmar calls it "a three-foot extension of a gardener's masculinity." The machine's indispensability is not clear, either: in subtropical, evergreen Los Angeles, there are few fallen leaves.

What is clear is a spectacular lack of communication between employers and employees: middle-class homeowners had legislated what they apparently couldn't dictate across the language barrier. This, in spite of the fact that the leaf blower may have brought them together in the first place. It introduced what had been an upper-class luxury to the masses. It swept away the rake and ushered in a new era of industrial "Mow, Blow, and Go." The classic figure of the rich man's gardener—a khaki-clad, pith-helmeted Japanese wielding topiary shears—gave way to a baseball-cap-wearing Mexican with an engine on his back, adeptly herding his cloud of grass clippings and dust gutterward, like a snake charmer late for an appointment.

Into the midst of the standoff at City Hall, into a scene of slow starvation made soggy by a persistent El Niño drizzle, came an angel from the harmonious, zero-emission future: Gody Sanchez, a thirty-six-year-old auto mechanic, bearing an electric leaf blower that he had cobbled together from car parts. "The idea for this came to me in a dream," he said. Sanchez demonstrated the machine's powers on a few stray ficus leaves. Somewhat weak, the protesters allowed, but nothing that couldn't be improved upon. As a form of industrial policy, the ban had worked. The gardeners had simply had a technology problem, and here was a potential solution: a nearly silent harbinger of the coming Age of Hydrogen. "To me, this guy is a living Edison," ALAG's Alvarez said. The tide was irresistible. Cautiously reassured, the strikers relented, and, finally, the ban took effect, to general silence in city hedgerows. —Wade Graham



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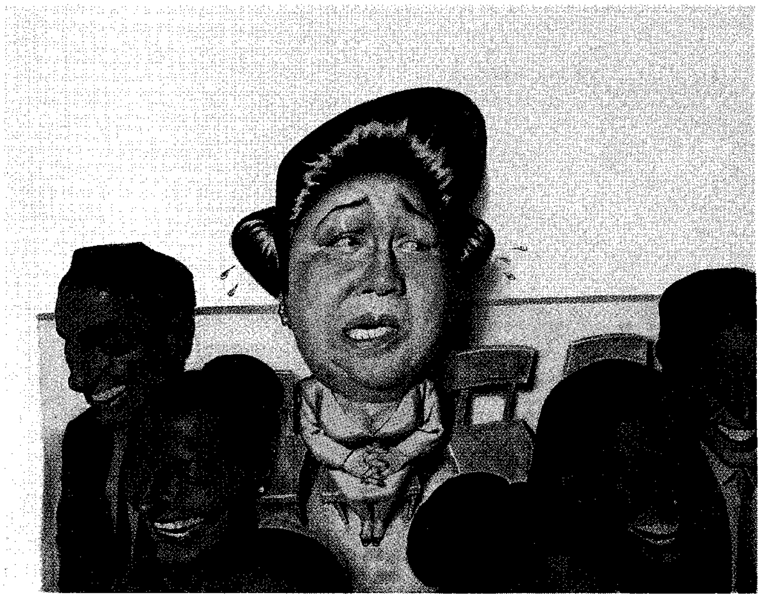
LETTER FROM MANILA

IMELDA'S TEARS

Why the world is still fascinated with Mrs. Marcos, and the Philippines isn't.

BY MIMI SWARTZ

KLEENEX boxes are strategically placed throughout Imelda Marcos's memento-filled high-rise condominium, in the Makati section of Manila. Some of them are covered with lace, some with ruffles; all are proffered by servants she summons with a small, handheld remote-control device. Imelda's tears, like so many other things associated with the former First Lady of the Philippines, are excessive and infamous: during the twenty-one-year regime of her husband, Ferdinand Marcos, she wept as a matter of policy, whenever she felt slighted by United States officials or foreign heads of state. She wept in 1986, when the People's Power revolution drove the Marcoses into exile in Hawaii, and she wept for the TV cameras later, during interviews about her husband's failing health. Imelda's tears were very much in evidence during her trial and acquittal on racketeering charges, in Manhattan, in 1990, and, again, upon her return to the Philippines the following year, when Corazón Aquino, then the President, refused her request to bring the extremely well-preserved body of her late husband with her. (He was transported home in 1993, and now lies displayed in a refrigerated glass case near his birthplace, in Ilocos Norte.)



If she resembles anyone at this point, it's not Marie Antoinette or Eva Perón—the big-time bad girls with whom she is very often compared—but Norma Desmond.

DANIEL ADEL

It is no surprise, then, that Imelda is still weeping today, given that she is besieged by lawsuits and faces a prison term. Almost five hundred million dollars in assets sits frozen in a Manila bank, while local courts try to determine how much money her husband may have pocketed during his rule; estimates run as high as two, three, and sometimes even five billion dollars. Meanwhile, Imelda has been convicted of graft for a 1993 instance of leasing state property at a rate described as "grossly unfair to the government" and sentenced to twelve years in prison. In January, the Philippine Supreme Court refused to set aside the verdict, leaving her with few options.

Imelda's response to these setbacks has been to become a candidate in the Philippines' Presidential election, which will be held on May 11th. Running in a field of eleven candidates, she barely

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registers in the polls, yet she persists in making campaign appearances, at which she promises to share the Marcos wealth with the people. "Where do I go?" she asked the other day, her eyes welling. "It's not a political election I'm in; it's a moral and political crusade."

If she was once known for her beauty and charm, and later for her ruthlessness, and still later for being the world's most avid shopper, the singular characteristic of today's Imelda is anxiety, which is displayed in a certain hesitancy in her seductive, singsong speech, a beseeching quality about the eyes, and a categorical refusal to dispense with prepared text. A visit to her luxury condo is a routine that has become familiar to reporters all over the world. There is a tour of art works that may or may not be authentic: Pissarro, Michelangelo, Picasso, Gauguin. This is often followed by an inspection of photographs that cover every horizontal surface in the sun-drenched living room, which offers a view of Manila Bay. The photographs show Imelda posed with leaders of the Free World, such as Lyndon Johnson, George Bush, and Ronald Reagan; Imelda posed with global villains, such as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi; and Imelda posed with American heroes, such as Charles Lindbergh and Douglas MacArthur.

The viewings are frequently followed by a lecture. Sitting in a gilded chair, Imelda presses the beeper, and a servant appears with a sketchbook and a blue marker. She then proceeds to draw a map of the world with the Philippines at the center, which, she explains, proves that its location remains strategic in the face of Chinese expansionism. That presentation is often followed by another monologue, for which another servant brings another sketchbook and a pen. In an urgent whisper, Imelda sets forth her personal philosophy. "Here I am, orphaned at eight, and the mother I keep giving to people is the mother I lost," she says, to explain her deep desire to rule the people of the Philippines once more. She draws circles within hearts within triangles, and stick figures within circles, and six-pointed stars, to explain what she calls "A Theology of a New Human Order" and "Seven Portals to Peace and Order." Sometimes she reads from her privately published spiritual autobiography, "Circles of Life." (The first two sentences: "Many things have been written about me and my life. Unfortunately, they have only scathed [sic] the surface.")

The lectures are followed by old films that have been converted to videotape and are now inserted into a VCR by yet another servant. On a big-screen TV appear the words "The History of a Race," followed by an extravaganza of Filipino pride which Imelda staged for the 1974 Miss Universe pageant, held in Manila's Cultural Center. It features men in primitive costumes marching down a sunny boulevard in front of men bearing wheelbarrows full of food marching in front of men bearing what looks like Second World War semiautomatic weapons, all passing by a reviewing stand that is full of beauty queens and movie stars. An alternative showing can include a fuzzy film of Imelda's first visit to China, in 1974, where she is greeted by a shuffling Chairman Mao and performs, to the accompaniment of a Chinese youth orchestra, her golden oldie, "Dahil Sa Iyo," which was either a love song for her husband or a love song for her country, or both. (Chorus: "Because of you I attained happiness / I offer you my love / If it is true that you shall enslave me / All of this because of you.")

Marcos's physical appearance remains remarkably unchanged: her massive hair still tucked, rolled, and dyed an indisputable black; her spike heels still tinted to match her handbags; a lively printed scarf at her throat; a custom-made *terno*, the native dress with butterfly-winged sleeves that she wore so often it became a joke on "Saturday Night Live." Her black bra still peeks out from her plunging neckline, and she maintains, as she has done for years, that her clear, unlined face indicates a purity of soul.

She also insists that she and her husband always did what was in the best interests of their beloved country. "Perception is real, truth is not," she asserts, with the bracing cynicism of a pro. "I'm not fighting for money and possessions. I'm fighting for something more precious. I pray that as we enter the cyber age—the Age of Transparency—the facts and the truth will out." In other words, Ferdinand Marcos will be proved to have been a benevolent leader, Imelda Marcos will be vindicated as a selfless champion of the destitute, and the world will cease to misstate the number of pairs of shoes she abandoned when she was forced to flee the country.

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Something about the whole ritual seems vaguely familiar, yet it fails to evoke either Marie Antoinette or Eva Perón, the big-time bad girls with whom Imelda is very often compared. If she resembles anyone, it's Norma Desmond, the aging film actress in "Sunset Boulevard," who

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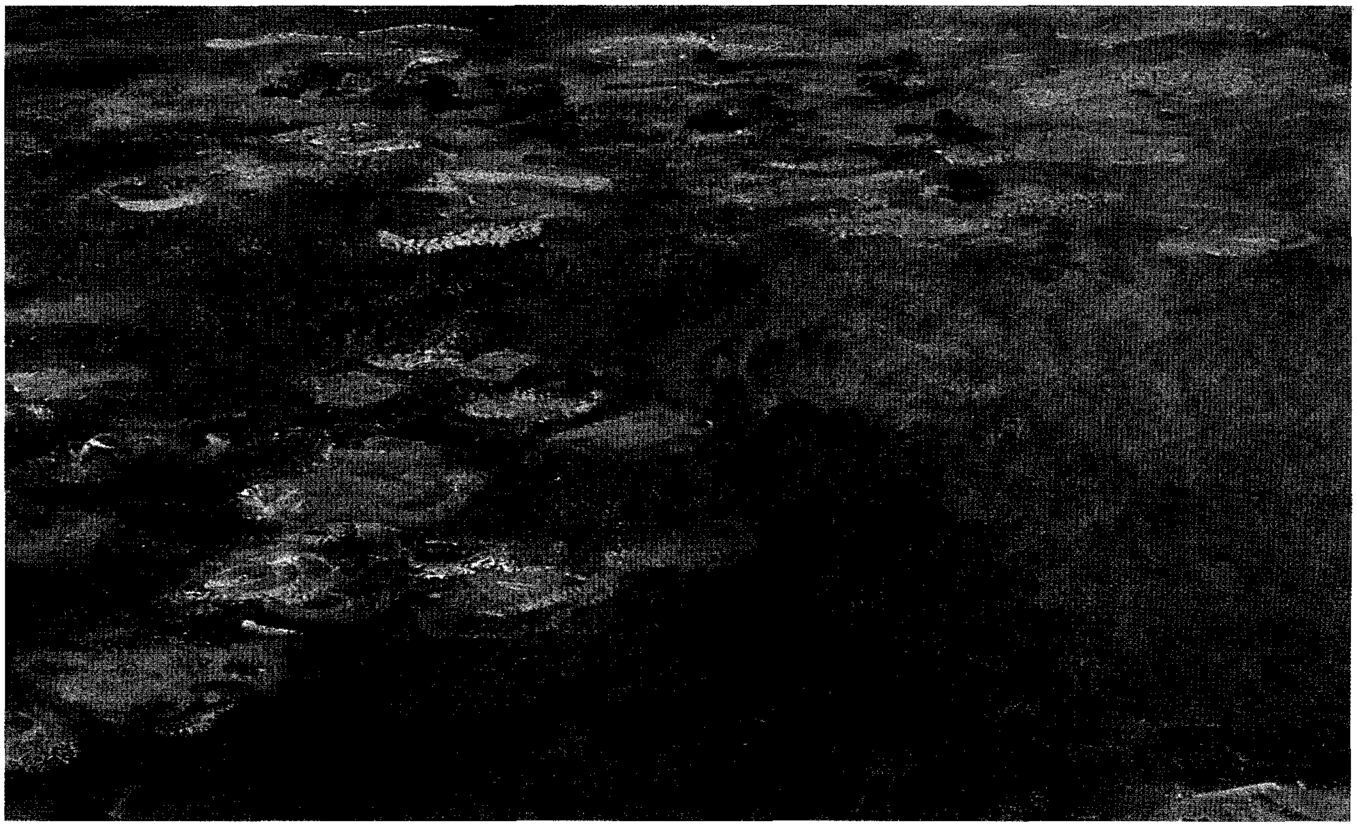

Claude Monet, *The Pond of Water Lilies*, 1917-1919 Musée Marmottan / © Photographie Giraudon

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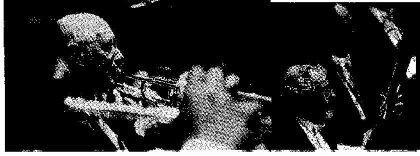

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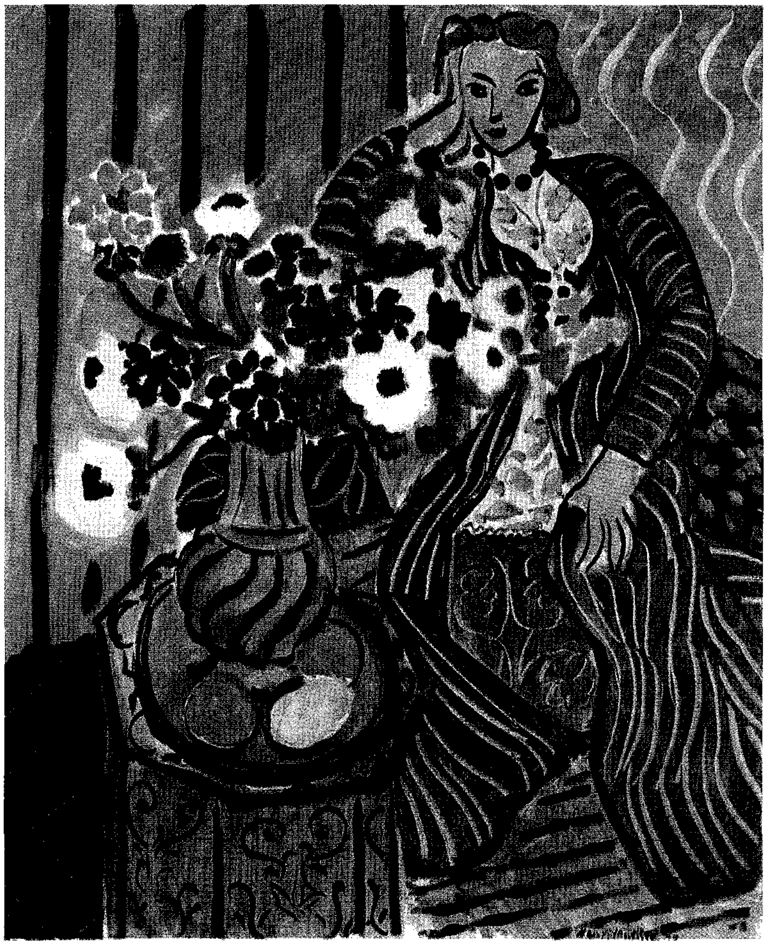

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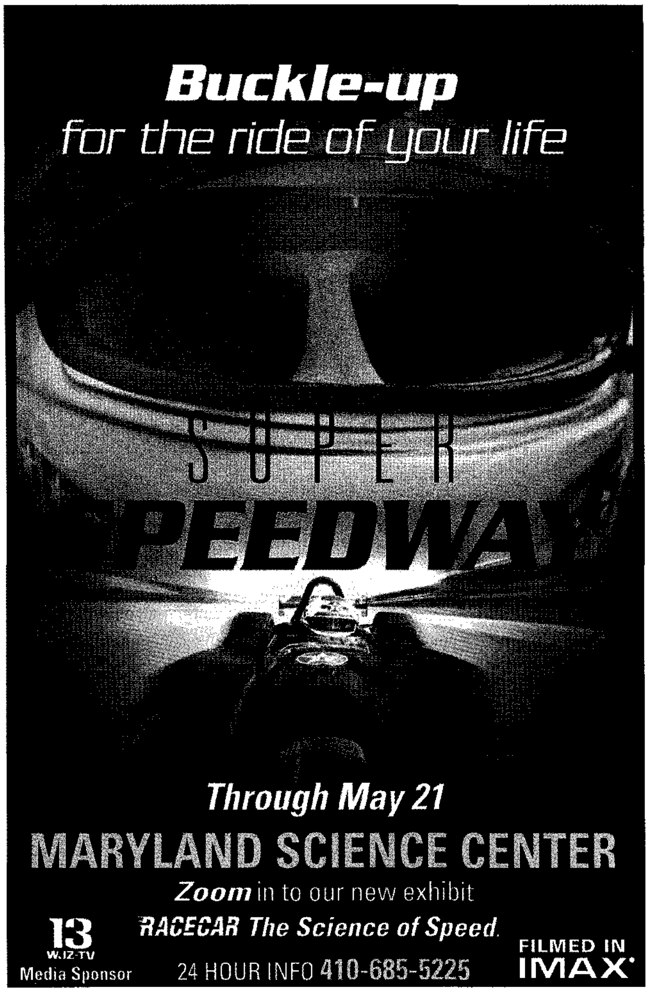

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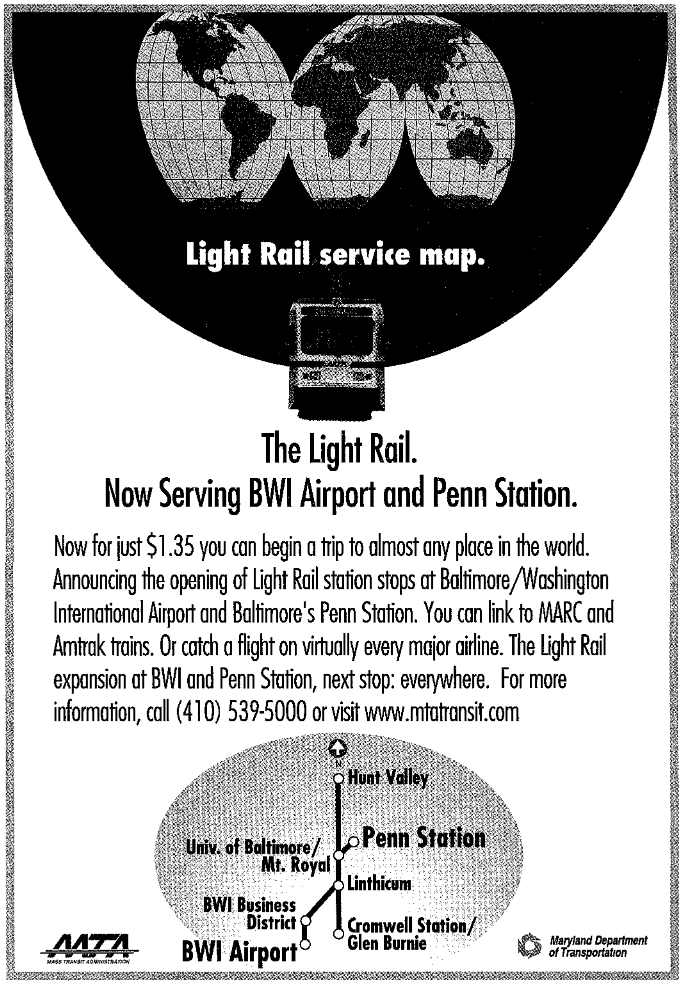

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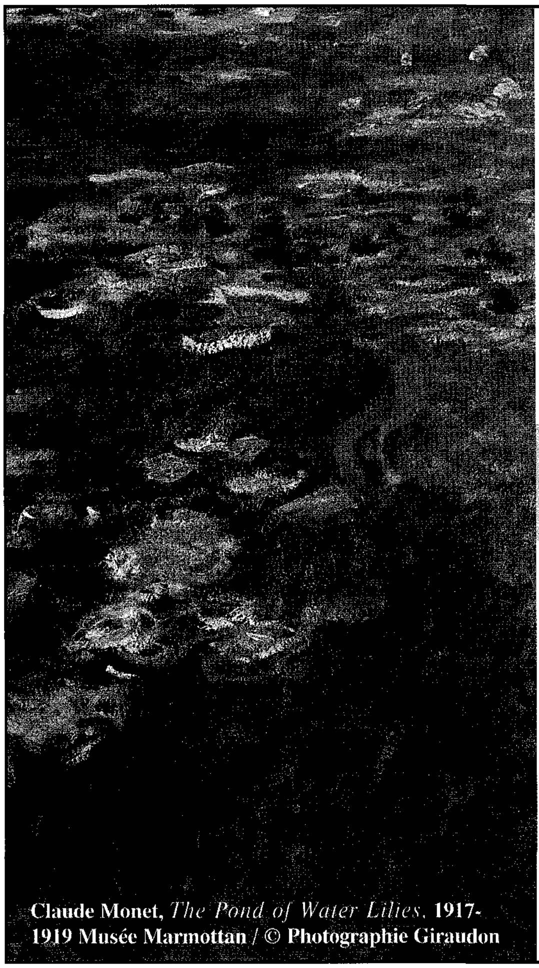
Claude Monet, *The Pond of Water Lilies*, 1917-1919 Musée Marmottan / © Photographie Giraudon

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I heard, wipe my lips of the last words I said,
erase the sights I saw from my eyes, smooth my brow of worries,
and fold my arms across my chest like the sleeves of a shirt after ironing.
And salve my flesh with perfumed oil to anoint me King of Death for a day
and arrange in my pelvic basin as in a fruit bowl
testes and penis, navel and frizzy hair
like an ornate still-life from some past century,
a very still life on a ground of dark velvet,
and tickle my mouth hole and asshole with a feather to check,
Is he still alive?
And laugh and cry by turns and administer a last massage
so it passes from their hands through me to the entire world
till the End of Days.
And one of them will sing "God Full of Mercy,"
will sing in a sweet voice "Merciful Womb,"
to remind God that mercy is born from the womb, true mercy,
true womb, true love, true grace.
On my life, that's what I want in my death, in my life, on my life.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI

(Translated, from the Hebrew, by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld.)

believed that she would cease to be if she failed to appear before the public. "She doesn't know life in the private sector," an American political consultant who has worked for the Marcoses said. "There is no private sector."

THE Filipino intelligentsia are contemptuous of Marcos's international celebrity and weary of the protracted legal battles. They doubt that the lawsuits will ever completely recoup the supposed stolen billions. (Seven hundred million dollars has been recovered so far.) Many Filipinos have simply decided that Imelda is already getting the punishment she deserves. "She's ignored," the political analyst Alex Magno says. "Not being invited to cocktail parties is bad enough. Having to break into cocktail parties is a fate worse than death. I've seen her sitting in corners like a wallflower."

The Philippines was a United States colony for close to fifty years and was its principal client state in the Far East for another forty. The United States-backed revolution that led to the election of Corazón Aquino in 1986 was supposed to bring prosperity and put an end to centuries of foreign domination, internal corruption, and calamitous poverty. That did not happen. Aquino's government was so intent on eradicating all traces of the Marcoses that it accomplished little else, and it was the target of seven coup attempts.

Fidel V. Ramos, who was elected to a six-year term as President in 1992, had served both Marcos and Aquino. His Administration got a lucky break when panicky Hong Kong investors, anticipating reunification with China, shipped their fortunes off to Manila; this economic boost allowed Ramos to restore stability and fund a number of pro-growth programs that enticed multinational corporations to create local jobs. But now the Asian crisis has forced a devaluation of the peso, and a term-limit law prevents him from running again.

In the election that will take place next month, Filipinos who came of age under Marcos's martial law and the Aquino revolution will be transferring power to a generation that has only vague memories of both. These younger voters don't seem to care much about nation building. Serious issues of economic development and the country's increasingly restless Muslim minority interest them less than the scandals involving the front-running candidate, Vice-President Joseph Estrada, a former movie star who has been linked in the press to local drug lords and implicated in several assassination attempts. (Estrada denies both allegations.)

The Philippines is currently rated one of the most polluted countries on the planet, and ranks third globally in cases of tuberculosis. Agricultural mismanagement has led to the importation of formerly native crops, like sugar and rice. Crime is rife in the Philippines, which *Fortune* last year named the kidnapping capital of Asia. And despite the reinstatement of civil liberties and a free press the country's ruling oligarchy remains well entrenched. Marc Plattner, who is the co-director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies and an authority on democracies, observes, "If a country's corrupt, that doesn't mean it's not a democracy—it's a corrupt democracy."

In fact, elections in the Philippines function something like a national welfare program. In a country where the minimum wage is five dollars a day, an undecided voter is one who has not yet received gifts of food or cash from a candidate. That is the main reason that the local media have largely ignored Imelda's candidacy. She may or may not have the necessary funds to buy votes ("In 1981, they spent a billion dollars," one person who is familiar with the Marcos regime has asserted, "and they were in *power*"), but she surely lacks the massive organization needed to distribute the payoffs.

Still, Imelda must be factored into the calculus of the election, because she commands a stubborn loyalty among the poorest of the poor. She could draw enough votes to hurt Estrada's candidacy and help that of José de Venecia, Ramos's candidate, or Alfredo Lim, the mayor of Manila, and many observers suspect that her real aim is to barter for her freedom, throwing her support to the candidate who promises her a pardon. That would be fine with many progressive Filipinos, who dread the prospect of Imelda going to prison. "If she goes to jail, that's Hollywood all over again," Alex Magno said. Most Filipinos would like to avoid any situation that sets off another round of in-

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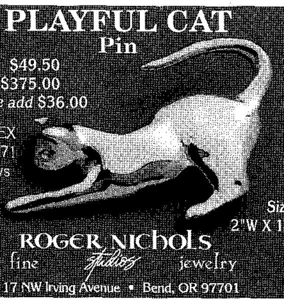
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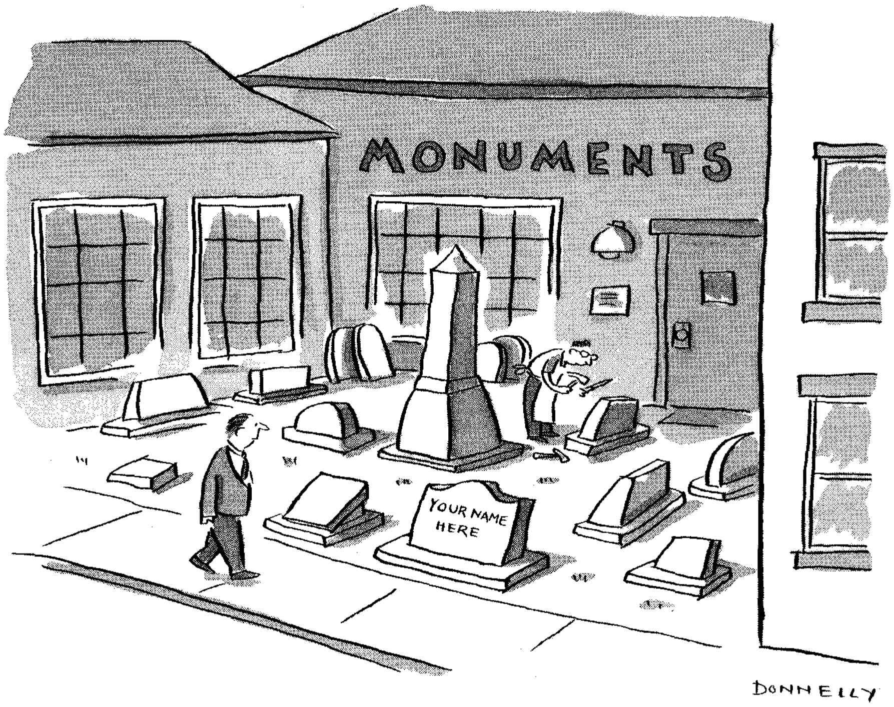

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ternational humiliation by drawing the attention of Imelda's true constituency, the foreign press.

LUCKILY for Imelda, that constituency doesn't care whether she's a viable candidate or not, because she's always good copy. When a film crew for the Australian production of "60 Minutes" was in Manila in March to cover the campaign, its members visited Marcos in her condominium, where many of them had been received before. ("Did she draw the pictures for you?" one member of the crew asked me afterward, his eyes twinkling.) For the occasion, Imelda changed from a print-interview ensemble—a pink dress with green shoes—into black slacks, a black silk blouse printed with enormous yellow flowers and cut just like all her dresses, and a pair of black patent-leather mules with transparent tops. In addition to earrings made of marble-size pearls, she put on a huge heart-shaped diamond ring.

"I've brought you a present from Australia!" exclaimed the interviewer, a handsome fellow who had been waiting downstairs while the crew set up, so that this meeting would appear spontaneous. He greeted Imelda with the hearty, indulgent manner of a war correspondent sent to cover a beauty pageant. As the cameras began to roll, a grinning producer opened a box and handed Imelda a pair of soft leather boots—the kind worn by hipsters in the Outback and on Madison Avenue.

Imelda smiled and put a hand over her mouth. "They know how deprived I am," she said, and then summoned a servant to help her put on the boots. (Imelda's shoes are no longer on display at the Malacañang Palace, where Aquino liked to keep them as a reminder of Imelda's excesses. After the Ramoses had them removed to a local shoe museum, tourist visits to the palace plummeted—a fact that Imelda never fails to mention.)

"Hey! You've still got the shoe phone!" the interviewer exclaimed. "Can I call my son?" Imelda nodded, and he placed the call, making himself at home.

When Imelda talks to interviewers, she evinces both eagerness and helplessness, and often bursts into flustered, girlish giggles. She encourages the shoe jokes, perhaps to deflect attention from other questions, such as those concerning torture, human-rights abuses, financial corruption, and the assassination of Marcos's chief political rival, Benigno Aquino, during the Marcoses' reign. "The nice part of this shoe joke is that when they went to my closet they found shoes, not skeletons," she told the "60 Minutes" reporter.

Several women friends were at the condo with Imelda, including Sol Vanzi, a longtime aide who handles Marcos's international press contacts, and Ileana Maramág, who describes herself as Imelda's "personal biographer." Vanzi announced that she had won a contest at the Manila press club the night before by guessing how many pairs of Imelda's shoes had been left behind at the Malacañang Palace.

"One thousand one hundred and seven," one of the ladies said.

Vanzi beamed, pleased with herself. "Everybody else said three thousand."

"They forgot to divide by two," Imelda said, grinning. This was obviously an old joke.

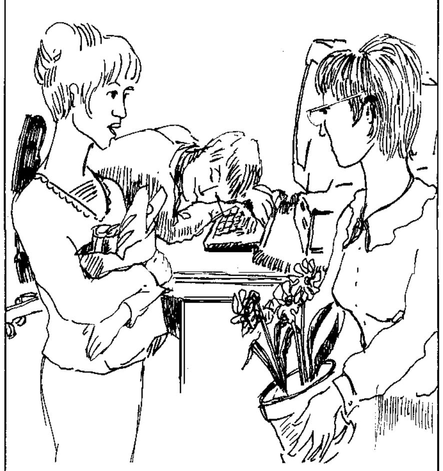
BECAUSE of its status as an American colony, and the subsequent powerful military presence of the United States at Subic Bay and Clark Air Force Base, the Philippines has been an outpost of American culture in the Far East for the past century. This remains true, even though, in 1992, the Philippine Senate refused to extend the United States' lease, and the bases were closed. In Manila today, American light rock is ubiquitous, either in its original form or remixed by Filipino pop stars, and the only people more deeply revered than American movie stars are American businessmen—for instance, Bill Gates, who visited Manila in March.

As a child growing up in the province of Leyte, a beautiful group of islands southeast of Manila, Imelda once said, "I knew how to eat an apple before I knew the banana. I knew the American anthem instead of my own anthem." Clans determine social status in the Philippines, and when Imelda later moved to Manila she made much of the fact that she was a Romualdez, one of the country's most powerful families. What she did not say—until an unauthorized biography published in 1970 forced her to be more truthful about her life—was that her mother had made a loveless marriage and her father had squandered his portion of the family fortune. After her parents separated, Imelda spent a part of her childhood living in a ramshackle garage with her mother; her mother died, of pneumonia, in 1938, when Imelda was eight. Thereafter, Imelda lived with her father until she was old enough to move to Manila, where she lived in the care of wealthy and scornful relatives.

Steeped in American culture, Imelda learned to flirt by enticing chocolate from American G.I.s during the forties, and perfected her singing style on tunes like "Don't Fence Me In." Like many poor but pretty American girls, she realized that her looks could help her achieve upward mobility. She won a series of beauty contests, and then, in 1954, charmed a young congressman named Ferdinand Marcos, who was elected President of the Philippines in 1965. In the nineteen-sixties, with the war in Vietnam escalating, the United States was intent on consolidating its power base in Asia, and the Philippines was a valuable ally. The United States government and the American press alike were well disposed to the Filipino First Lady, who, like her country, appeared to be beautiful and welcoming, foreign but at the same time familiar. In 1966, *Life* magazine declared, "With all the grace and style of Jackie and with an energy reminiscent of Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Marcos appears to be everywhere at once."

In those days, Imelda had begun lavishing vast amounts of money on grandiose building schemes and was already cataloguing her myriad shoes according to the colors of the rainbow. But Americans tended to view the lavish spending through a patriotic lens. Just as Imelda had struggled to deflect the snubs of her wealthier relatives, she now struggled, as the First Lady, to keep her country from looking third-rate. (A summit meeting between Lyndon Johnson and several Asian leaders in 1966 is remembered by Liz Carpenter, Lady Bird's former press secretary, as being "the most glamorous party I ever went to in my life." The Marcoses, she explained, "were trying to put the Philippines on the map.")

Imelda was influenced by America's cult of celebrity as well. On her first visit to New York, in the fifties, she wanted to visit the glamorous John Robert Powers school of modelling. Throughout her husband's Presidency, she performed pop songs at state dinners and political rallies both at home and abroad, and she always travelled with a film crew. In the seventies and eighties, she officially joined the jet set, boogying at Hippopotamus with Andy Warhol and cultivating friendships with George Hamilton, Van Cliburn, and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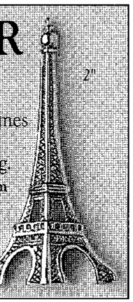
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Brooke Shields. But particularly after martial law was declared, in 1972, and her husband began jailing his critics and muzzling the press, her public image began to tarnish. She became known as the Iron Butterfly, and it was not long before she was regarded as just another dictator's wife, frittering away her nation's patrimony. Her spending habits were ridiculed and her show-business pretensions mocked.

But Imelda was also a crafty businesswoman, who invested some of the Marcos millions in American real estate, often under assumed names or through shell corporations. Soon after she and her husband were persuaded to cede power and flee to Hawaii, she was indicted by United States authorities on racketeering charges for some of these real-estate deals. Her trial, in Manhattan, was mobbed by the media. Imelda had attained her own strange brand of celebrity.

One night after Imelda had made a campaign appearance at a rally of Charismatic Catholics, she gave me a tour of her public works. Manila's awful traffic makes it nearly impossible to traverse the city during the day, so after midnight she and Ileana Maramág, a few other women, a bodyguard, and I piled into a frigid air-conditioned Mercedes van and were driven through the city by her driver. The darkness, I later realized, helped obscure the fact that some of the buildings, deserted and decaying, served as homes for squatters.

"This is the film center they have abandoned," Imelda said glumly, as we pulled up to a massive building that she had hoped would become a gathering place for international stars.

"Built in seventy-seven days!" Maramág chimed in.

We drove past the Senate Building and the Convention Center, which was built at a cost of sixty-five million dollars in the late sixties, when most of the nation lived in abject poverty. "The beautiful landmarks in metro Manila are her projects," Maramág explained. In coffee-table books displayed in her apartment, these buildings appear in vibrant color, filled with people bustling about. Now they served only as a reminder of her fall. "That was the museum where they pulled out all my beautiful Italian paintings, because they were not Filipino," Imelda complained, with uncharacteristic peevishness, as we passed the National Museum.

As the van sped back to the condo, Imelda caught her breath and shuddered. "There used to be flowers here," she said. Now there was only concrete, apparently because the road had been widened during the Aquino days. Cory, Imelda declared, had "absolutely no taste."

More sanguine Filipinos are willing to give the Marcoses some credit—for raising the country's profile abroad, for building a highway system that tied the country together, and for improving public education. But very few citizens are nostalgic enough to wish for Imelda's return. Particularly in Ilocos Norte, people believe that Imelda's excesses were her husband's undoing. Even among the poor, the loyalty to Imelda has eroded. ("I believe she would share the Marcos wealth," one haggard woman told me at a Marcos campaign rally. "If pigs could fly," her husband retorted.)

It's not hard to understand why the government finally allowed Imelda to return, in 1991: Aquino, then the President, wanted to put the former First Lady within reach of lawsuits seeking some restitution for the crimes of the Marcos regime, since under Filipino law no one can be tried in absentia. What is less easy to understand is why Imelda chose to return, rather than live in comfortable exile on the spoils of her husband's reign. She made her first attempt at a political comeback in 1992, finishing fifth in a field of seven candidates for President. Then, in 1996, she successfully ran for Congress in her home province of Leyte, whose people are happy to let her hold office, perhaps because she has shown no interest in the minutiae of lawmaking. Yet Imelda, who is close to her children—two daughters and a son—and has the financial resources to live well, apparently views a life of obscurity as no life at all.

Still, there was no evidence, despite her claims of affection for the masses, that Imelda enjoyed campaigning. It seemed to exhaust rather than energize her. Whenever crowds began to press in on the street, calling out "Ma'am! Ma'am!" (it sounded to American ears as if they were calling for their mothers), Imelda recoiled in fright. She became especially flustered when someone managed to breach her security and recite a tale of woe. Turning frantically toward a servant, she wiggled her fingers for some cash, pressed it into the speaker's palm, and rushed on.

One sunny Sunday a few weeks ago, I accompanied Imelda to a Mass that was held in the sprawling mansion that had once been Ferdinand Marcos's family home. During the revolution, Marcos haters vandalized the place, taking the time to chip tiles, one by one, from the bathroom. But Imelda had restored the house, and this should have been a great day for her: the crowd was full of Marcos loyalists, many of whom had been trucked in from the provinces. When the Mass was over, they traipsed behind her through the house, calling her name, threatening to topple several pink porcelain geishas that were set on a dining-room table.

But Imelda didn't really brighten until she offered a tour of the house to a film crew from Bryant Gumbel's "Public Eye." She led the crew through her bedroom and that of her late husband, declaring, "We always slept together." ("How did you decide which room to go to?" the producer asked her. "Sometimes I would crawl to him, sometimes he would crawl to me," she replied, an answer that was particularly noted by those who recalled that Marcos was a famous womanizer and the romance of the Marcos marriage was widely assumed to have been a fiction.)

The loyalists waited for her at the bottom of the stairs, then followed her out through the garden and across a tennis court to the door of what had been a disco for her children. "Private meeting, private meeting," one of the servants told them. We went inside to wait for the crowd to thin. There were still mirrored balls hanging from the ceiling. A nurse proffered a pad and a blue pen, and Imelda began to explain her theory of Philippine prominence to the producer of "Public Eye."

Finally, it was time to dash for the van. The air-conditioning had already been turned up to Imelda's chilly specifications. She settled herself on the van's plush mauve upholstery and offered only halfhearted waves to stragglers remaining near the driveway. At last, she sighed heavily and snapped the window shade shut. "Enough," she said, and it almost sounded as though she meant it. ♦

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LETTER FROM ISRAEL

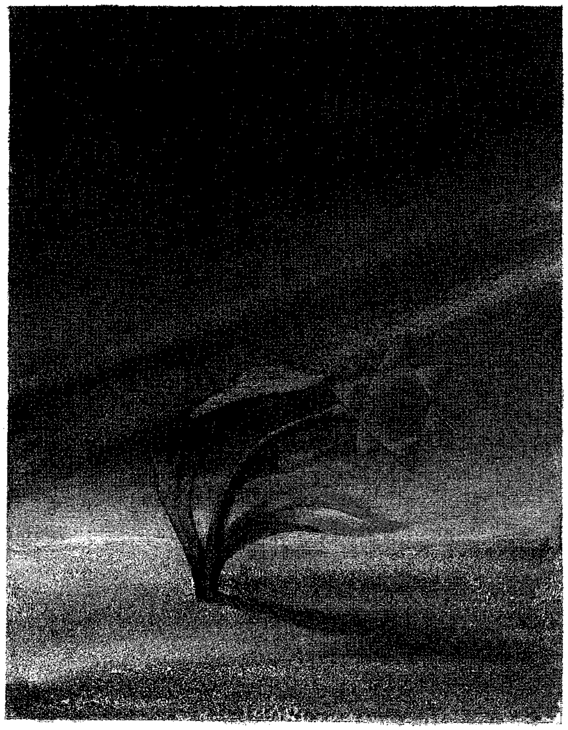
FIFTY IS A DANGEROUS AGE

After half a century, the nation changes in unexpected ways.

BY DAVID GROSSMAN

WHEN I was born, my mother pushed me in my carriage through the streets of our neighborhood, in the Jerusalem of the early fifties. The neighbors would greet her happily and bend over to take a look at me, spit "*tfu!*," and exclaim, in Yiddish, "How ugly!" That was the custom, especially among those who had come from Eastern Europe—to insult the baby so as to ward off the evil eye. When I grew up, I saw the ceremony reënacted many times, but now I was able to get a good look at the women's faces. I realized that they were not trying to protect the baby from an abstract evil eye but from something very concrete, something they bore with them in those gazes which knew that nothing could be more bitter than what they had seen.

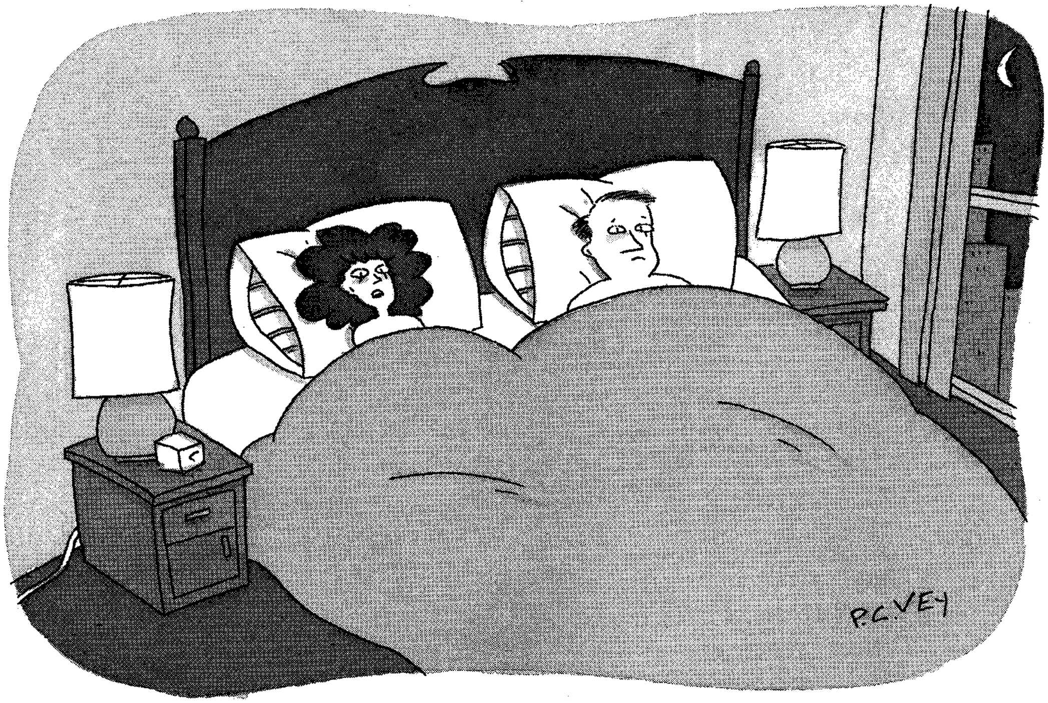
Israel was founded fifty years ago out of a great insult. It was the insult of a people rejected and different, sentenced to be the horrifying symbol of the foreign and cursed. The insult is etched to this day in the individual and collective memory, in the form of endless wounds and small, heartbreaking humiliations. Some time ago, for a radio station, I participated in an encounter between Israeli Army officers and Holocaust survivors. Two brothers, now in their sixties, sat on the stage. As children, they had lived in Vilna, at the time of the Nazi invasion. One day, while they were playing soccer with their Christian friends, the Nazis began rounding up Jews. The brothers were kidnapped from the playing field and put on a train that took them to a death camp. Through the cracks in the sides of the train, they could see their friends continuing the game.



EUGENE MIHAESCO

The two brothers told their story in quiet voices, and the officers began crying. Some ran out of the room. I especially remember one of them, little more than a boy, with a wiry body and curly hair. I cannot forget the way he kept banging his forehead, over and over again, on the barrel of his M-16.

Almost every Israeli has a gash like that in his memory. If a child is not born with one, the Israeli educational system carves one out for him. There are family sagas that transfer it from generation to generation. There are the Jewish holidays and days of observance—so many of them—which are reminders to each and every Israeli. Here is the holiday to remind us of the miracle that saved us when the ancient Greeks wanted to destroy us; here is the holiday to remind us of our flight from slavery in Egypt; here is the holiday to remind us of how marvellously we were saved from destruction in Persia; here is



"Don't be too upset. If we were meant to have good sex, we probably would have married other people."

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a fast in memory of the destruction of the Temple; here is Holocaust Day.

DURING the country's half century of existence, more than twenty thousand Israelis have been killed in hostile attacks. This means that, on the average, since the founding of the state one person has been killed each day, one family destroyed. There are nine hundred memorials to the war dead in this small country. (In Israel, there is, on the average, one memorial for every twenty-two dead soldiers; in Europe, the ratio is one memorial for every ten thousand dead.) There is no week on the Israeli calendar in which there is not a memorial day of some sort for a traumatic event.

A person walking through downtown Tel Aviv can, in the space of five minutes, set out from Dizengoff Street (where a suicide bomber murdered thirteen people two years ago), glance apprehensively at the No. 5 bus (on which another suicide bomber killed twenty-two civilians four years ago), and try to regain his composure at the Apropo Café (where a year ago yet another suicide bomber killed three women; none of us can forget the images of a blood-spattered, newly orphaned baby). When my daughter took her first field trip with her kindergarten classmates, they went to Yitzhak Rabin's grave and to the adjacent military cemetery.

Life is full of the dead. Five boys who went to school with me were killed in wars, and many more are still suffering from their injuries. Just two months ago, Israel was panicking over the possibility that Iraq would attack with deadly bacteria (which is why every Israeli baby receives from the government, at birth, a special gift—a kind of sealed cradle to protect it from poison gas and germ warfare).

STILL, Israel astonishes its visitors precisely with the force of its vitality and its appetite for life. It is as if energies pent up during generations of repression of wants and urges were breaking out all at once and demanding expression in every possible way. There has been an outburst of consumerism. There were nearly three million departures by Israelis to other countries in 1997, meaning that, on the average, half of us went. People are having lots of babies, too—twenty-one births per thousand individuals in 1996, compared with only about fourteen in the United States and Western Europe.

There are also things, such as the emotional climate, that can't be quantified but color life here. Israelis are generally open, straightforward, and warm, extreme in their passions, in their anxieties, in their sensitivities, in their manner of speaking, in their body language. They are extreme, too, in the volatility of their moods. And they are intimate with total strangers.

One morning, I got on a bus and sat down next to a fleshy older man with a red face. He gave me a doubtful look, as if he were considering whether I was reliable enough to hear what he had to say. Then he said, with a quiet sigh, "Nobody knows what the other guy keeps inside." Before I had a chance to ask what he meant, he lifted up a huge brown envelope, drew out an X-ray, and held it up to the light. "That's me," he said, with unrestrained pride. I took a careful look, but I wasn't able to identify the picture with the person. "Those are my kidneys," he explained. "They're always making sand and stones." He lifted the picture higher, so that other people could enjoy it, and explained his entire inner world to an interested crowd that had quickly gathered around him. For a moment, I was able to view the colorful crowds of Jaffa Street, Jerusalem's main street, through this man's inner organs. I saw high-school kids with earrings, a squad of soldiers gathered around two blond tourists, Hasidim in long black coats, a procession of Japanese philo-Israeli cultists clad in lemony yellow, two policemen frisking an Arab, a group of three-year-old kids from a nearby heder running and shouting in the throng: that noisy swarm was visible through a single pair of kidneys!

THE mood in the country today recalls that of a family in crisis, or even in illness. Perhaps this is because Israelis, deep in their hearts, sense that for more than thirty years—ever since the Six-Day War—they have been caught in a profound historical error, which has wound itself inextricably around them. It could be that the violence is beginning to invade the internal tissues, turning even a brother into an enemy. Or perhaps it is the inevitable disgruntlement of those who have experienced a great miracle that has become no more than human reality laden with contradictions and bruises.

The Israelis direct this disgruntlement in all directions: against the world, which, according to a popular song, is "entirely against us"; against the international press, which always seems hostile; against the United States and Europe, which "dare" to dictate peace initiatives; and against the Arab countries and the Palestinians. But they especially direct it inward, against themselves, and sometimes it seems as if there were hardly any other place as hostile to the Jews as Israel is.

In recent years, there has been a gradual emergence of ghettos for different populations that are entirely alienated from one another. The immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who constitute almost a fifth of the country's inhabitants, have created a sociocultural enclave that shows few signs of blending with the original Israeli culture, and even disdains it for its "shallowness."

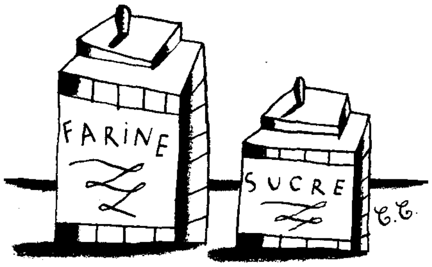
To be fair, the natives are not enthusiastic about getting close to the new immigrants, either. Oriental Jews, those whose roots lie in the Muslim world, have not been full partners in the country's leadership and élite. Today, they are demanding compensation, rejecting those features which in their minds express the Ashkenazi, or Western, character of the state. Tens of thousands of Ethiopian immigrants feel that they are being treated like pariahs and foreigners. Most ultra-orthodox Jews do not recognize the state or Zionism at all. As for the million Arab citizens of Israel—almost a fifth of the country's population—they do not identify with the state's national, mostly Jewish goals. Some three hundred thousand foreign workers, almost a twentieth of the country's population, live under abominable conditions—in poor neighborhoods on the margins of the big cities. Meanwhile, approximately two hundred thousand Israelis are out of work, and they feel betrayed and rejected by the state.

The kibbutzim, too—the country's glory in the past, the most salient symbol of the Jew's return to his land, to his earth, to normality—have in recent years undergone a process of delegitimization and decline. At first, they were depicted, by the leaders of the political right, as a symbol of the arrogance of the Western Jews, the Ashkenazim. Religious leaders denounced them as "not Jewish enough." Then they got tangled up in financial adventurism. Today, most of them are deep in debt, the majority of the younger generation is leaving, and the older generation feels as if the entire concept of the kibbutz were fading away before its eyes.

At the same time, the Army, which was once the melting pot of Israeli society, is no longer considered a young person's ticket into that society. Today, it is not at all uncommon, as it was in the past, to hear young people declaring that they will do anything they can to evade military service. It may be good that the Army is losing its centrality and its power, but nothing else can create the same social coalescence.

ONE moment (never seen on television): In 1982, the Lebanon War broke out. I was a young reservist and had been called up and sent north. It was just a month after the birth of my eldest son, and the last place I wanted to be was in a village north of Lake Karoun, facing Syrian tanks.

One day I stood there on guard, leaning against the wall of our improvised headquarters, dressed in an ill-fitting uniform, rifle in hand. A tall woman approached from the end of the street, dragging along a small child who was shouting and weeping. She came up to me and addressed me directly. "Do you see Hassan, here?" she asked. "He's a bad boy! Doesn't do as his mother says!" I had no idea what she wanted from me, and I was afraid that this was one of those Lebanese traps, and an especially detestable one. It turned out that I was right. "Now, I want you to tell him," the woman said loudly, "what you do in Palestine to boys like him." I was baffled, and speechless. "You take them from home," she explained to me emphatically, talking adult to adult above the child's head, "and you put them in little tiny rooms, with no food and no water . . . " She continued on in great detail, and the boy fell silent, gazing at me in trepidation. The woman did not even wait for my response. She turned around and left, dragging the boy with her.



SOMETIMES there is a moment of grace, and the thick cloud of clichés hugging the ground clears and the land itself appears. The margins of the desert are now covering themselves with the fresh green growth of spring; a wave of yellow blooms is now, in March and April, flowing from one end of the country to the other—acacia trees and clover and carpets of mustard flowers. Mt. Carmel, green always. The Galilee, with its erotic play of mountains and valleys, with its placid, meditative eye of Lake Kinneret open in its heart.

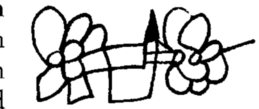
Sometimes, in precisely those places that are most dense with meaning, an Israeli like me feels a need to get off the main road and find a path that appears on no map—a path that has no identity other than the view it provides. That view is generally bald and miserly. There are almost no thick forests, no broad lakes, no rushing rivers. There is just that little Lake Kinneret, whose water level every Israeli child monitors anxiously, fearing drought; there are a few woods planted by the Jewish National Fund, in an effort to create, as if by magic, an illusion of green Europe in the midst of the Orient; and there is only one river, the narrow Jordan, which must astound all those Christian pilgrims who have exalted it in their dreams.

But you can always find an open yet hidden spot in which you see no other human being and no place of human habitation: neither Jewish nor Arab, neither religious nor secular, not Jerusalem, not a settlement, and not a refugee camp. There you can wander a bit under the intensely blue sky, between the olive trees (which, Heaven help us, have already become a Palestinian national symbol) and the lumpy boulders and the yellowing stalks of grass.

I remember such a moment at the height of a year's odyssey that I had conducted among Israel's Palestinian citizens and among its Jews. I had a physical need to touch the land itself, the way it was before politics expropriated and nationalized it. I lay down on a big rock that was warm from an entire day's sun, and, with great pleasure, began to peel the land of its names and designations and titles—Israel, Palestine, Zion, the Jewish State, the Promised Land, the Holy Land, the Zionist Entity. . . . Then, for a moment, I had it again, my land and country, with the deep fissures in its skin, with its harsh, troubled beauty: a land, as the poet Chernikovsky wrote, "whose every inch of ground is to be softened, and every boulder," and the Palestinian Salem Jubran responded, "As a mother loves her crippled child, so I will love you, my homeland."

I WRITE all these things as someone who considers himself lucky to live in Israel—not because I think it is Utopia but because Israel is the only place in which a Jewish person can live with the vital ingredients of the history and culture and mental life of all the generations of Jews that have preceded him, and can realize them in the creation of a new and modern reality. This is also the place in which a Jewish person can implement the values and ideals that his culture has crystallized, and it is the only place in which he can formulate this for himself in the language in which his identity was created over many generations—the Hebrew language, which preserves all the codes of his past and renews itself day by day.

Living in Israel is, for me, still a spiritual adventure. It may be exhausting and frustrating, but how could I do without it? Sometimes I remind myself that my day-to-day life constitutes the object of longing and hope of eighty generations of Jews who lived before me. My children play and love and fight in a language that no one spoke for two thousand years, but for them it is full of life and is taken for granted. Were Abraham the patriarch (who would now be four thousand years old) to sit down for supper at my house, he would understand the greater part of the Hebrew spoken by my five-year-old daughter. What a wonder that is!



This is what it all comes down to: *Not to be foreign*. To belong. To be a partner with equal rights and obligations, a native and an organic part of this great body. What sweetness surges through the body from just writing those words. What bitterness floods the heart momentarily at the thought that in recent years so many Israelis felt foreign in their homeland.

Today—after the greening of the desert, the building of a defense force, the advancement of science and technology, the creation of a new Hebrew culture—questions (the general ones and the very personal ones) remain unanswered. How long will we be the prisoners of our fears? Will my son, when he goes to the Army two years from now, have to fight the children of my Palestinian friends in the streets of Hebron? To what purpose do we subordinate such a huge part of our strength and our creativity to the Army if we are unable to use this military power to make possible a fundamental change in our region? Has power come to be an end in itself, and have we forgotten that it must be only a means of protecting life? Or have we perhaps forgotten, because of this unbearable lightness of death that prevails around us, what the word "life" really means? Living means not just defending the borders of life, as Israel does with great effectiveness, but also doing something about what is going on within those borders. If we don't do this, in the end we will be like those suits of armor that no longer have knights inside them.

At the age of fifty, my mother likes to say, everybody gets the face he or she deserves. Were I to be given the cruel task of choosing a single picture from Israel's fifty years, a picture that contains the very essence of Israel's face, I would choose a moment that no Israeli can forget: November 4, 1995, Yitzhak Rabin standing on the platform facing tens of thousands, singing "The Song for Peace." I saw him from a distance of a few metres, and, for me, that is Israel's face. Not only because his life went through the most important stages of Israeli history—from the legendary Kadourie agricultural school, through the Palmach, the Six-Day War, and Entebbe, to the signing of the peace agreements with the Palestinians and Jordan, the double helix of "Israeliness"—but because in his face, the face of the handsome golden boy, the face of the mythological Sabra, we saw something of which we had had no "historical experience"—how that Sabra matured, and how he grew old, and how the ideal and the miracle are slowly embroidered into daily life, into reality, and into time. We saw him, the idealistic young man, stumbling amid political intrigues and the temptations of money, and we saw how, in a process that left us in awe, he came back and renewed himself, and overcame a way of looking at life which wars had engraved in him with blood. There, that Saturday night, when we stood and sang that song together with him, and enveloped him in our love, was the moment at which one could feel both the strength and the weakness of Israel—the vitality and the courage to rise above our anxieties and to be created anew. But there was also the dark extremism lying in wait in the dark, within us. And it had a pistol. From within us. ♦

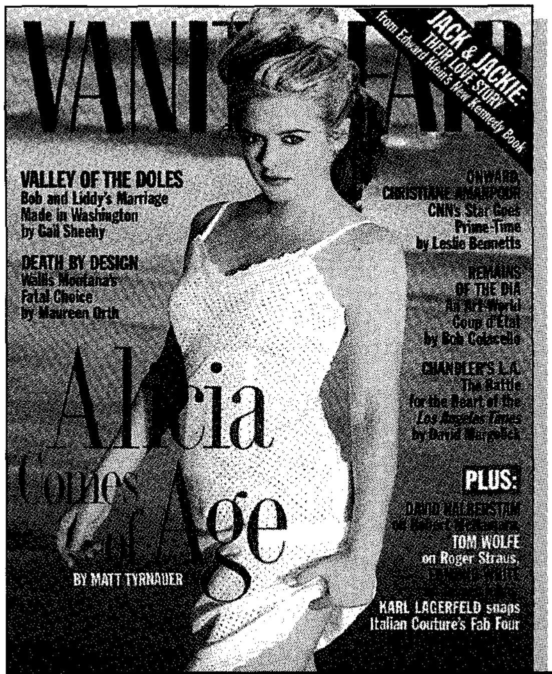
(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Haim Watzman.*)

THE PATH

Joe Simpson was a man I scarcely knew.
I saw him when he came to see his father.
Our talks, if they were talks, were brief and few.
And yet I think I knew the man, or rather,
I knew something about him. From his eyes
A certain light (though uncertain to me)
Seemed to precede him through the world of lies,
Flickering shadows where he could not see
What might await, what writhing shapes of pain,
What narrow passages, where only faith,
That cannot know what it is faithful to,
Can find the right path to the gates of death,
A path he followed, and did not complain,
A path that might lead nowhere, as he knew.

—ROBERT MEZEY

IRRESISTIBLE!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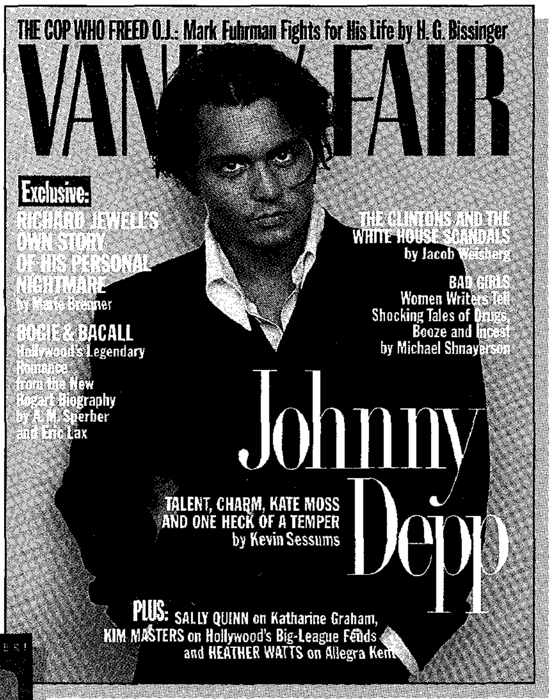
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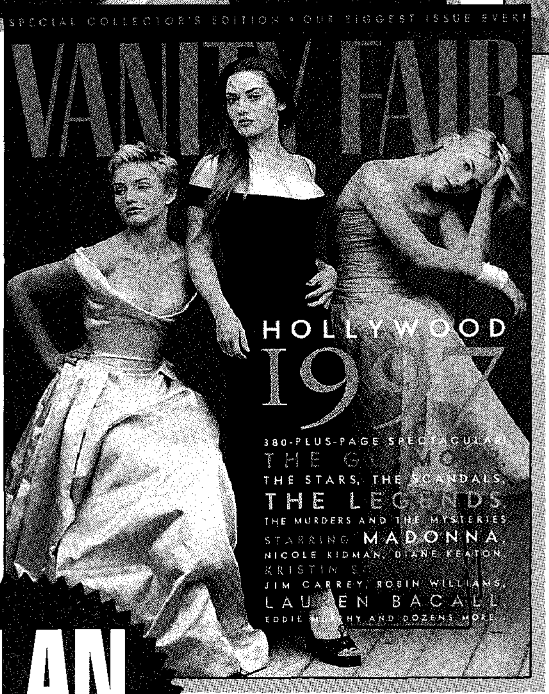
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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE CONTENDER

Few writers have commanded the public eye as much as Norman Mailer. But, as he turns seventy-five, has his real importance been missed?

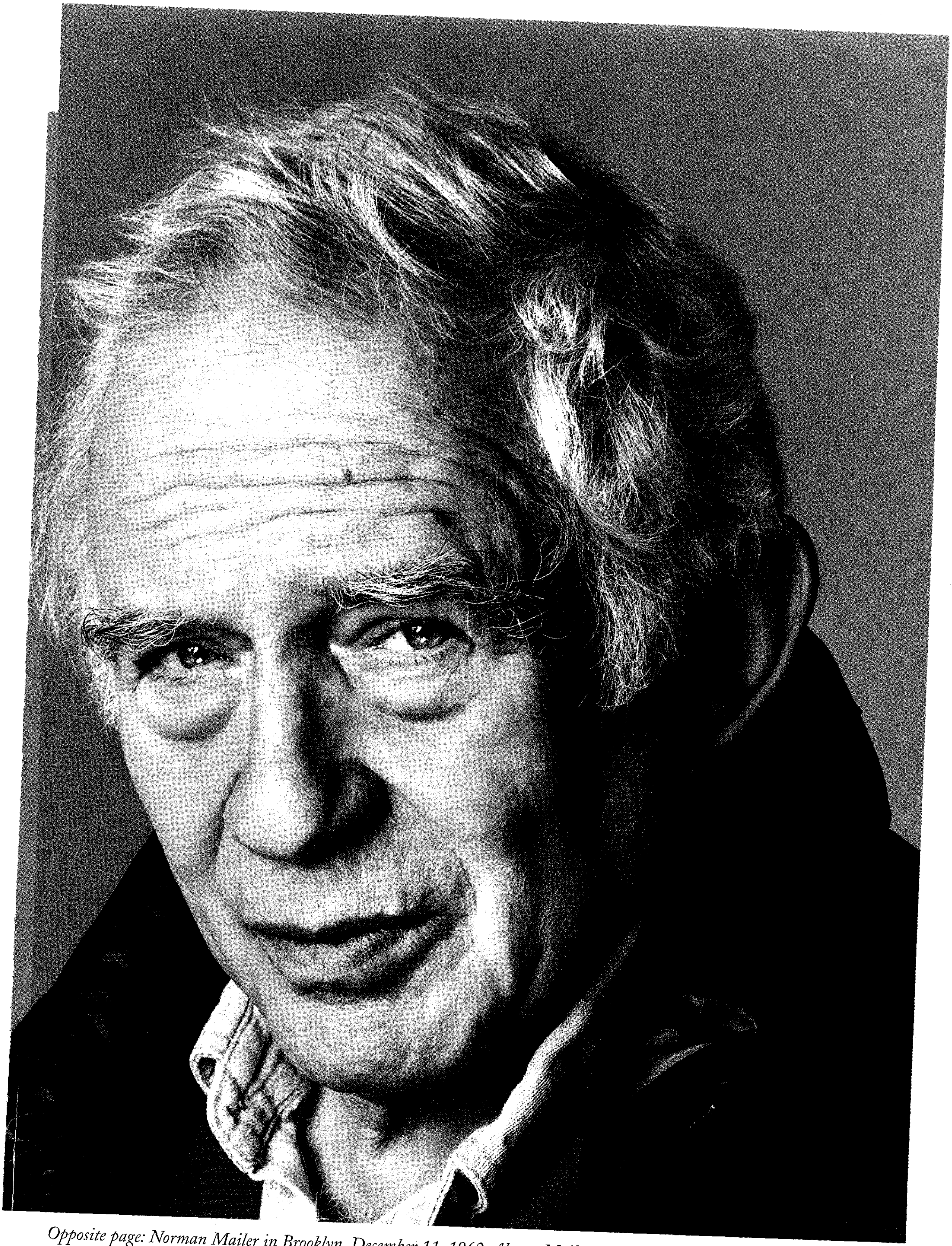
BY DAVID DENBY

BACK in 1964, a time when it was still possible for an American to be shocked by an ugly building, Norman Mailer began a piece for *Esquire* by murdering a hotel. The article was devoted to the Republican National Convention, which was held that year in San Francisco—a beautiful city that by the mid-sixties had become disfigured by "monstrous boxes of Kleenex ten, twenty, thirty stories high," an unsightliness culminating in the new San Francisco Hilton, which "looked from the street to have the proportions and form of a cube of sugar." Mailer went on:

> The rooms were small, the rooms were very small for seventeen dollars a day, and the windows were placed to the extreme left or right of the wall and ran from ceiling to floor, in order to allow the building to appear to the outside eye like a radio being carried by a model who worked in the high nude. The carpets and wallpapers, the drapes and the table tops were plastic, the bathroom had the odor of burning insecticide. It developed that the plastic cement used to finish the tiling gave off this odor during the months it took to dry. Molecules were being tortured everywhere.

It is impossible to overstate the liberating effect that those sentences, and many others like them, had at the time—impossible to exaggerate how much pleasure they brought, and especially to readers like me and my undergraduate friends, young men moldering in a fine state of genteel nullity. In that

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON



Opposite page: Norman Mailer in Brooklyn, December 11, 1962. Above: Mailer in New York City, March 4, 1998.

same year, Mailer told an interviewer that he wrote for men and women who had "no tradition by which to measure their experience but the intensity and clarity of their inner lives." For anyone hungry for that kind of intensity but ignorant of how to attain it, Mailer's writing was the most powerful of lures. One could read him and learn. In his piece on the Republican Convention, he wrote that the teen-age boys who turned out for Goldwater "tended to have a little acne, an introspective pimple or two by the corner of the mouth or the side of the chin, a lot of the boys looked solemn and serious, dedicated but slightly blank—they could fix a transistor radio, but a word like 'Renaissance' would lay a soft wound of silence, stupefaction in their brain."

Writing like that asserted very plainly that the world could be conquered. The stone-hard American blankness—the America of business and politics and technology, of dreadful architecture, dull kids, and stolid men, the America that left one depressed and defeated—all of it could be described, and thus in some way mastered. Observing supporters of Governor William Scranton in 1964, Mailer wrote that the Scranton girls at the Convention were "good-looking most of them, slightly spoiled, saucy, full of peeves, junior debs doing their best to be cool and so wearing their hair long with a part down the center in such a way that the face, sexy, stripped of makeup (except for some sort of white libidinous wax on the lips), was half-concealed by a Gothic arch of falling tresses."

When Mailer wrote down those impressions of the Convention, he was well into his golden run, a spectacular two decades stretching from the publication of "Advertisements for Myself," in 1959, to the publication of "The Executioner's Song," in 1979—twenty years in which he lived at the center of the American maelstrom as novelist and journalist, prophet and partygoer, immoralist and scourge. (He also managed to direct four movies, run for mayor of New York, and marry many times.) But, most of all, Mailer was a great writer of American prose, one in whom lavish powers of observation—the encompassing eye, the unshockable nose, which lingered over every odor—bolstered a genius for the long-limbed American sentence, with all its tensions and surprises, that is perhaps unequalled since James and Faulkner.

Mailer participated in the public world not innocently, as a mere observer, but greedily, eager for notice and power. No wonder he electrified young men (and some young women, too, though in a different way): here was an author of enormous ambition, literary to his fingertips, who rarely addressed the concerns of high culture but wrote with fierce complication about hoods and politicians, movie stars and astronauts, boxers and bullfighters. He was obsessed with power, with sex, with risktaking and failure. In person and in print, he could be boastful and combative; he may have sparred with cronies for fun, but he was also capable of dispensing—and receiving—unfriendly blows to the head, gut, and ego. Just as famously, he could be candid and sweet-tempered, and one imagines that over the years more people have been shocked by his good manners than by his bad manners. In all, Mailer was a protean American writer whose tumultuous soul never came close to self-satisfaction. If he put off many people with his obsessional rants—his bourbonized public speeches in Irish brogue or Texas redneck—it was still hard for anyone of normal curiosity to give a negative answer to the question "Haven't I learned something about myself and my country from this man?"

In January of this year, Mailer turned seventy-five. The year is also the fiftieth anniversary of Mailer's first novel, the Second World War classic "The Naked and the Dead," and, in celebration, Mailer's publisher, Random House, has brought out an enormous anthology of his writings, "The Time of Our Time," edited by the author. It is a book of twelve hundred and seventy-nine pages, a daunting and in some ways an eccentric volume, which has been organized not in the order of composition but according to the chronological order of the periods under Mailer's observation. For example, an excerpt from "The Naked and the Dead," which was written in the late forties, is closely followed by an excerpt from the 1991 novel "Harlot's Ghost," which is set a few years later, at the beginning of the Cold War. Mailer drives us straight through six decades of American history with a potent mixture of fiction and reporting, reflection and portraiture.

Thicker than a home medical manual, "The Time of Our Time" offers excerpts from all ten of Mailer's novels; the complementary fifties classics "The Man Who Studied Yoga" (story) and "The White Negro" (essay); much political writing; re-creations of Arthur Miller's marriage to Marilyn Monroe and of the relationship between the murderer Gary Gilmore and his girlfriend, Nicole; a tender defense, from "The Prisoner of Sex," of Mailer's literary forebears Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence; incomparable pieces on bullfighting and boxing, including Mailer's loveliest essay, "Homage to El Loco," which is an evocation of novice matadors and restless crowds in Mexico City's summer heat; some oddities and apologies; and also one bloodied but unbowed act of defiance—an account of Mailer's exchange, in 1971, of headbutt and slap with Gore Vidal (Vidal slapped, Mailer butted). Mailer's version of the event goes on to describe the subsequent shambles on "The Dick Cavett Show," during which he hotly attempted to bring Vidal to account for some vicious things he had written—while Vidal aced him out by coolly playing to the audience. Mailer includes the piece as an act of self-exposure: he knows that his manner is too overwrought for television. Yet he is also proud that he burst the tube, proud of his rampaging speeches, which revealed the triviality of routine TV chitchat.

No contemporary writer could match the book's variety, its manic energy, its spiritual violence and striving. Still, its mere presence makes one uneasy. A Mailer anthology? What is he up to? The book is a dangerous move: it could be taken as the lining of a very large coffin by a writer who is too worried about his reputation and who is not quite joking when he speaks of reincarnation. As he tells me, "I love karma because the idea is that the sum of all your efforts is received by some monitoring angel who assigns you to your next *boulot*. You go up and you say, 'In my next life I would like to be a black athlete.' And the monitoring angel says, 'Cockroach. But you'll be the fastest cockroach on the block.' " It's not a bad fate, but is a writer who is anthologizing himself at seventy-five making his peace with fame? Or does Mailer intend the book as a springboard—a way of looking forward to the work he still wants to do?

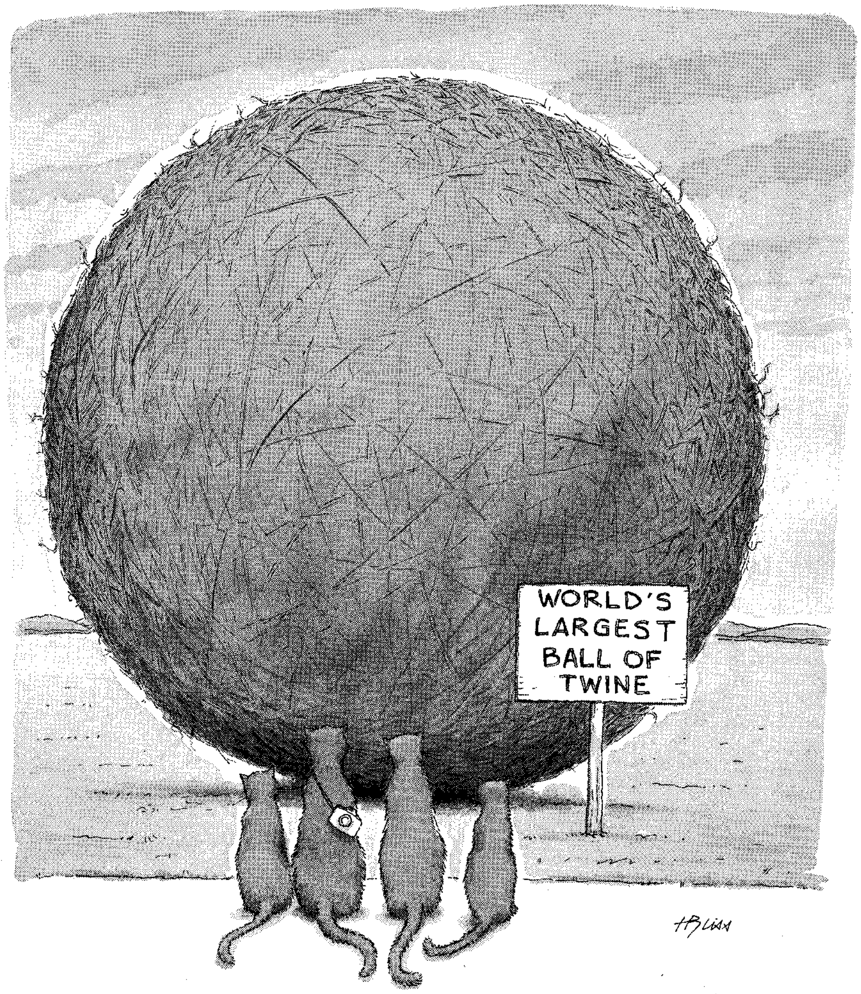
MAILER and his wife, the painter Norris Church, spend most of their time now in Provincetown, Massachusetts, the famous retreat that is situated at the end of Cape Cod's upraised hook. In the summer, Provincetown is a mad ball, a rowdy home to gays and adventurous teens looking for fun. In the off-season months, it's bleak and unpopulated (it has about thirty-five hundred inhabitants), a rather modest and unyielding art colony. Along Commercial Steet in the morning, the wind moans strangely, as if trapped in the Holland Tunnel; the gulls hang over gray Cape Cod Bay; the houses are mostly small or medium-sized, the cars inexpensive and elderly. Yet Mailer, who only a few years ago passed his evenings at the dinner tables of East Side hostesses, loves the quiet days of this old fishing town: he has been coming to Provincetown, on and off, since 1946.

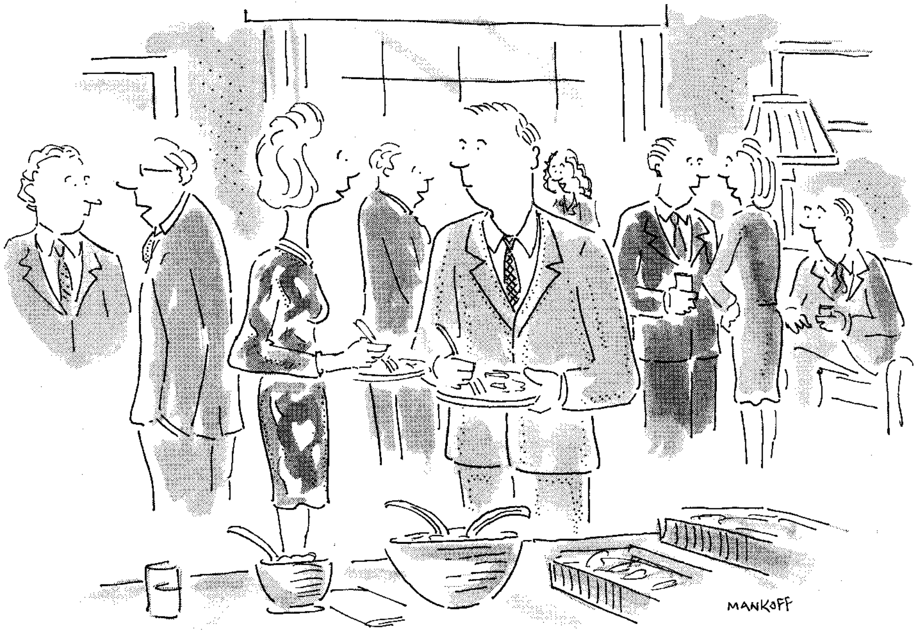
When a visitor arrives—as I did, in early March—Mailer shows the place off: this is where the Pilgrims momentarily landed before going on to Plymouth; this, in centuries past, is where the whores worked; and this is where the painter Robert Motherwell lived. It's as if Mailer himself were a painter, proudly taking me around his studio and demonstrating his materials. A touching anecdote emerges from the elaborate self-presentation. This February, the Crown & Anchor, a famous Provincetown inn and tavern that was a longtime home to delirious Halloween revels, was badly damaged in a fire, and a good many feathers and tiaras went up in smoke. Recently, a fund-raising event was held to replace the costumes, and Mailer read from "Tough Guys Don't Dance." The assembled mourners, including many transvestites from Boston and elsewhere, vigorously applauded. When I remark to Mailer how odd it is that he of all people—macho guy and occasional baiter of homosexuals—resides in the East Coast capital of gays, he just shrugs and pronounces the finest of all American sentences: "Live and let live."

Later, he says in his hooded but urgent voice, "In the sixties, we called it the Wild West town of the East. I like the egalitarianism of the place. There's a small part of me that feels that in a town like this you should live a little more modestly." Well, Mailer hasn't always lived modestly or quietly in Provincetown. Years ago, the bottles piled up in the morning after long, brawling summer parties; blood was spilled, foreheads were stitched. Now, Mailer tells me, his serious drinking days are over; and he does seem pleased by the solidity and order of his life.

His house, which was built in 1907, by a doctor who was a transplant from White Plains, has an exterior of red brick rather than the classic gray shingle of Provincetown. One enters a living room filled with light, a flood that pours in from windows facing Cape Cod Bay. At high tide in stormy weather, the surf shoots up in front of the second-story windows; sky and water are in view at any hour. The vista is good again from Mailer's study, under the eaves—a long attic room that holds a lot of exercise equipment and a big old desk and has a window facing west, toward Provincetown Harbor and the town's incongruous Florentine-style campanile.

Considering how many hard days and hard days' nights have gone by, Mailer is looking well. His hearing has faded slightly, and he has some arthritic trouble with his knees. Using a cane, he sways on Provincetown's streets like a retired sea captain. But he's lost weight—he's down to about a hundred and eighty pounds from the rotund two hundred of a few years ago; the loss is partly the result, he says, of a complicated diet that commences with a nearly indigestible cabbage soup. ("The elements fight against one another so hard," he tells me, "that the cells exhaust themselves, and you lose weight." Mailer is a vitalist in all things, even in weight reduction.) His hair is thinning but snowy white, his forearms are strong, his gaze is steady, his voice is full; all in





"One question: If this is the Information Age, how come nobody knows anything?"

• •

all, he still has the look of a barrel-chested elder Jewish sage which he achieved about fifteen years ago. David Ben-Gurion striding through some brave kibbutz gave off a similar robust glow.

Upstairs, in the writing room under the eaves, Mailer settles himself in an old desk chair. Swivelling as he talks, like a fisherman reeling in a big one, he defends the arrangement of the anthology. "Look," he says, "if you do something like this, the underlying cry of the heart in the author is 'Look at me—look at how wonderful I am!' You can't put together an anthology of your own work without saying, in effect, 'This is absolutely well worth it.' So in the beginning you put pieces together which will say to people, 'This is how well I write about place.' I'm going to have fifty pages of excerpts about place. I'll show action, I'll show sex. I have all these categories—and then, at a certain point, I realized that this book is going to be potted plants. People would dip in and say, 'That's nice. He writes nicely about place. Yeah, this poem isn't too terrible.' It would be read as an anthology—it's there to serve you. I thought there must a better way to do it."

Objections come to mind. Some very good writing unconnected to the march of history has been left out. Among the missing pieces is the 1968 essay that begins as a review of Norman Podhoretz's autobiography, "Making It," and turns into a reckoning with Mailer's literary sponsors, the New York intellectuals. Also absent is most of Mailer's writing on movies, which has often been more illuminating than the work of professional movie critics. But perhaps it's pointless to quibble: no writing career as long and diverse as this one could be adequately contained in a single anthology. And Mailer has never shown the least interest in making a conventional arrangement of his work. Such collections as "Advertisements for Myself" (1959), "The Presidential Papers" (1963), and "Cannibals and Christians" (1966) were held together by a connective tissue of autobiographical commentary, political analysis, or poems. Mailer wants people to read a collection all the way through, as if it were a novel.

As if it were a novel: This may be the key. It turns out that the connective tissue for a good part of this traversal of Mailer's life's work is the 1991 novel "Harlot's Ghost"—the vast, unfinished book devoted to the C.I.A., from the beginning of the Cold War into the mid-nineteen-sixties. "The Time of Our Time" includes many episodes from "Harlot," and the reader is able to follow, in pieces, the rather debonair education and rapid rise of the young agent Harry Hubbard, his various adventures with C.I.A. and K.G.B. men, and his love affairs with other agents' wives and with a Judith Campbell Exner type called Modene. Between these episodes, Mailer deposits—along with much other stuff—selections from his celebrated nonfiction commentaries on the Cold War, the Kennedys, Castro, Oswald, and so on.

One of the anthology's more remarkable effects is to make us forget which realm we are in—nonfiction or fiction, reality or fantasy—or why any of these categories matter. The realm we are in, of course, is Mailer's imagination of history, a place where fiction may be more fully shaped, more suggestive and charged than mere fact. For stretches of the book—say, in the pages devoted to the sixties and, particularly, to the Kennedy-Castro period—the interweaving of public event and secret intimation suggests how thoroughly our reality has been suffused with paranoia and conspiracy. In Mailer's retelling of it, the recent history of the country becomes largely its secret history; assassination plots and love affairs move the levers of reality. As readers, we happily enter a long, long night in which movie stars, Presidents, intelligence operatives, and gangsters meet in that ideal Mailer after-hours spot where only grownups are allowed to gather and where the music is always insinuating and sweet. The book becomes, willy-nilly, a kind of erotic commingling of these big players: Marilyn meets Fidel.

At other places in the anthology, however, the elements simply refuse to come together, and "The Time of Our Time" turns into an oddly disjunctive mélange of richly composed excerpts. In any case, Mailer can't keep the historical progression going. What is he to do with the gigantic sacerdotal-sodomitic novel "Ancient Evenings," which is set in Egypt in 1200 B.C.? And where is he to put "The Gospel According to the Son," an account of Jesus' life? In desperation, he dumps them at the end of the anthology, in the section devoted to the nineties—as evidence, perhaps, of a growing religious impulse in later years.

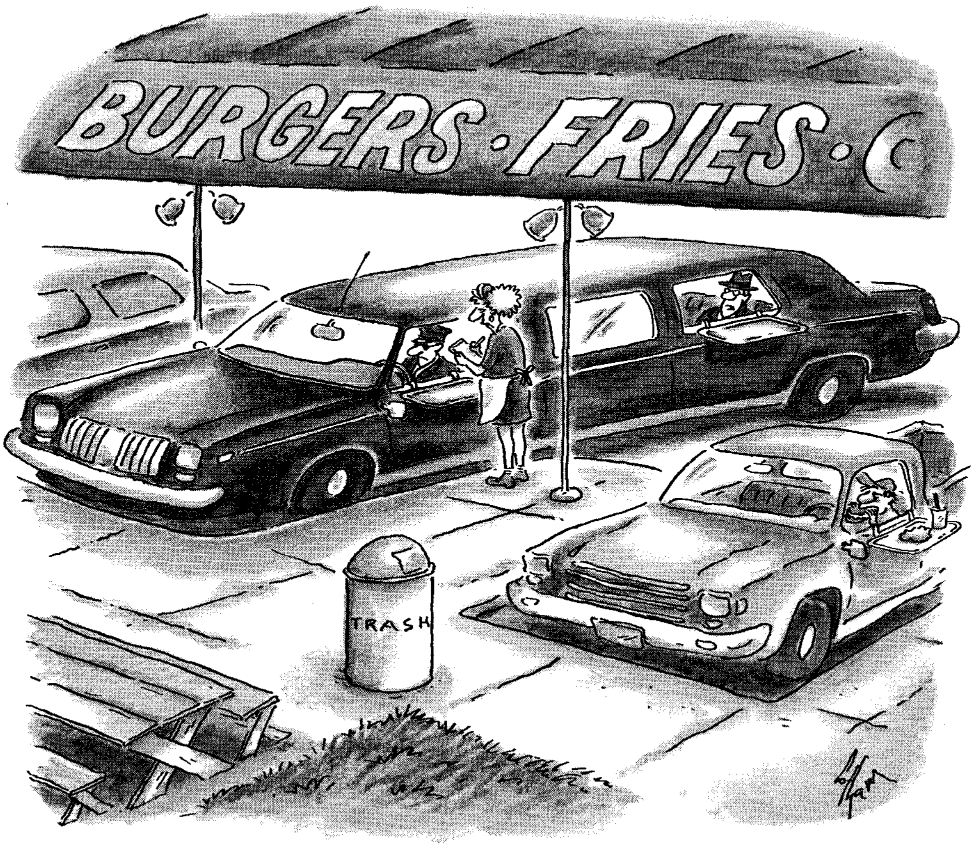
When I suggest that organizing the selections in the order of composition might have offered to readers a clear spiritual autobiography of Norman Mailer, he sighs and says, "I've been waiting to write an autobiographical novel all these years, but I've been waiting to become the hero of my own life in order to write it. I have never become the hero of my own life."

MAILER was born in Long Branch, New Jersey, on January 31, 1923. His father, Isaac Barnett Mailer, an amiable gambler and con artist, was often unemployed and improvident; his mother, Fanny Schneider Mailer, worked long days in a home-oil delivery business to support Mailer and his sister Barbara. When Norman was nine, the family moved to the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. A precocious student at Boys' High School, he entered Harvard at sixteen, and within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor he began to calculate exactly which theatre—the European or the Pacific—would yield the great novel of the Second World War. From the beginning, he was an astute manager of his career, an attentive pursuer of the zeitgeist. When he completed Harvard, in 1943, however, he did not enlist (somewhat to his shame) but began a long and difficult composition entitled "A Transit to Narcissus," based on his experiences as an attendant in a Boston psychiatric hospital. In 1944, he married Bea Silverman, the first of his six wives, and was drafted into the Army. He wound up in the Philippines at the end of the war, and volunteered for reconnaissance patrol as a rifleman.

"The Naked and the Dead" was written very quickly—in sixteen months—after Mailer was discharged, in 1946, and it enjoyed an immediate critical and commercial success. Mailer, however, has never been a writer much given to satisfaction with his past work, and he now seems somewhat irked by the book's continuing fame. He describes it to me as "a book written by an amateur, with all the virtues of a book written by an amateur—and the vices. The style is close to atrocious in many places."

My ear detects no atrocities, and what strikes one very strongly on rereading "The Naked and the Dead" is how little intimidated Mailer was—how brave he was in ignoring the conventional pieties concerning a war that almost everyone in the country felt good about. The men in Mailer's fictional platoon are a long way from feeling good; they possess no ennobling sense of being part of some large and grand enterprise. Rather, they are obsessed with the moment-by-moment state of their bowels, their kidneys, their sleep, their food, their sandpapery relations with one another. Mailer has always excelled at terrain—the disposition of forces in a battle, at a protest march, or at a party. In "The Naked and the Dead" the movement through terrain is a movement through exhaustion and fear. The men carry a wounded comrade through the jungle for days, and Mailer registers every fibrillation of mood, the sweats and the gases, the spurts of exhilaration and the slow sinking back into apathy and exhaustion. For a moviegoer, the book has a special interest: the men's uneasiness with one another stands in sharp contrast to the gung-ho spirit of the platoon and bomber-crew movies of the same period, in which the serviceable vessels of democracy—Wasp, Italian, Irishman, and Jew—buried their differences and, in the end, killed Krauts and Japs together. Despite much lilting anecdote and exuberant profanity, "The Naked and the Dead" captures a saddening moment in American life—the shift after the war from a vibrant Depression-era outlook, which was economically pinched yet indomitable, to something smaller, meaner, and more self-protecting.

The two novels that followed, "Barbary Shore" (1951) and "The Deer Park" (1955), are generally accounted failures, though each has its fascinations. The first is an airless, obsessional fable, part Dostoyevsky and part forties film noir, about a repentant American Stalinist, a distraught Trotskyite woman, and a vicious government agent, all of them stewing in their own juices in a Brooklyn boarding house. The hero, who watches these three, and stews quite a bit himself, is something of a cipher: he has amnesia—an admission, perhaps, of Mailer's inability to find an identity and a voice for himself after the enormous success of his first novel. Mailer clearly had no intention of writing about a soft Jewish boy from a loving and protective Brooklyn family. Rejecting that part of himself, he invented, for "The Deer Park," another uncertain surrogate: Sergius O'Shaug-



"This will be separate checks."

nessy, Air Force hero, blond and good-looking but vaguely guilty; a would-be writer, an adventurer among the Hollywood sexual champions and power types encountered at Desert D'Or (i.e., Palm Springs).

As Mailer was writing these books, he struggled like a man in a cage against the perceived confinements of the post-war years—conformity, the waning of radical faith, the growing emotional conservatism of a country obsessed with security. He assembled a record of these struggles (booze, Benzedrine, and Seconal made their contributions, too) in the extraordinary collection "Advertisements for Myself"—a soulful, confessional work that, for better or for worse, has done more to establish the fifties myth of repression and revolt than any other document of the time. Its centerpiece essay, "The White Negro," with its notorious celebration of spontaneity, violence, and "the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one that preceded it," has been attacked again and again: at the time, the Beats found it square, the New York intellectuals thought it irresponsible, some blacks found it condescending. Yet the essay has the curious effect of upping the ante on almost everyone who reads it. Mailer proposed the hipster as contemporary hero, a psychopath, utterly selfish, who exorcises the dread of the atomic age by existing for the intensity and immediacy of his pleasure—an immediacy embodied in the Negro, who had always lived with violence and had developed a proud indifference to respectability. Mailer himself now calls the piece "naïve" and admits, "I didn't understand that there were two things vastly more important than orgasm to most people, and that's power and its handmaiden, money." But "The White Negro" sets up a spiritual hierarchy of acts, ranked by danger and riskiness, and it leaves even skeptical or derisive readers dissatisfied with ordinary pleasures.

As James Baldwin and others pointed out, Mailer was no hipster himself; he was far too earnest ever to lose himself in spontaneous hedonism. In Mailer's writing, for instance, sex is rarely a flight into sweet or stormy clouds of pleasure; it is more likely to be a turbulent existential undertaking, caught in the dialectic of past and present, in which lovers draw forces and experiences from

DESIGN

BUG LOVE

IN an age in which fashion designers become more celebrated than the people who wear their clothes and architects more famous than their clients, the people who design cars are virtually unknown. That is true even of the man who designed the most talked-about car of the moment, the re-creation of the Volkswagen Beetle. His name is J. C. Mays, and, as far as Volkswagen is concerned, he doesn't exist. Mays, a forty-three-year-old native of Oklahoma, left Volkswagen-Audi a couple of years ago, after having the idea that what Volkswagen needed to revive its flagging fortunes was a new version of what may have been the most successful car ever. Along with a colleague, Freeman Thomas, Mays designed a prototype of the New Beetle, and it is a striking achievement—possibly the first car ever that can be described as witty. Volkswagen, however, credits someone else as the "initiator" of the design, since Mays is now head of design at the Ford Motor Company, and, in the cutthroat automotive industry, you don't admit that your hottest product was designed by the competition.

This would be no more than an amusing footnote of corporate pettiness if it were not for the fact that the New Beetle has got people talking about car design. When people talk about cars, they usually use words like "powerful," "sexy," "smooth," and "aerodynamic"—words that connote, at least to men, a certain serious, techno-sleek image. Car design, so the rule goes, is supposed to look ahead, not back.

In any other field, Mays's desire to revisit the past would have been routine, even banal. Architecture and fashion, for instance, have been recycling their own history for years. But the automotive industry is a business based on a continual supply of the new: cars are expressions of the latest technology. Architects may be willing to run fibre-optic cable inside classical moldings, but automotive designers don't put air bags in cars that look like a Model T: there's too great a gap in such a situation between the container and what it contains. In other words, you can bring back miniskirts, but not fins.

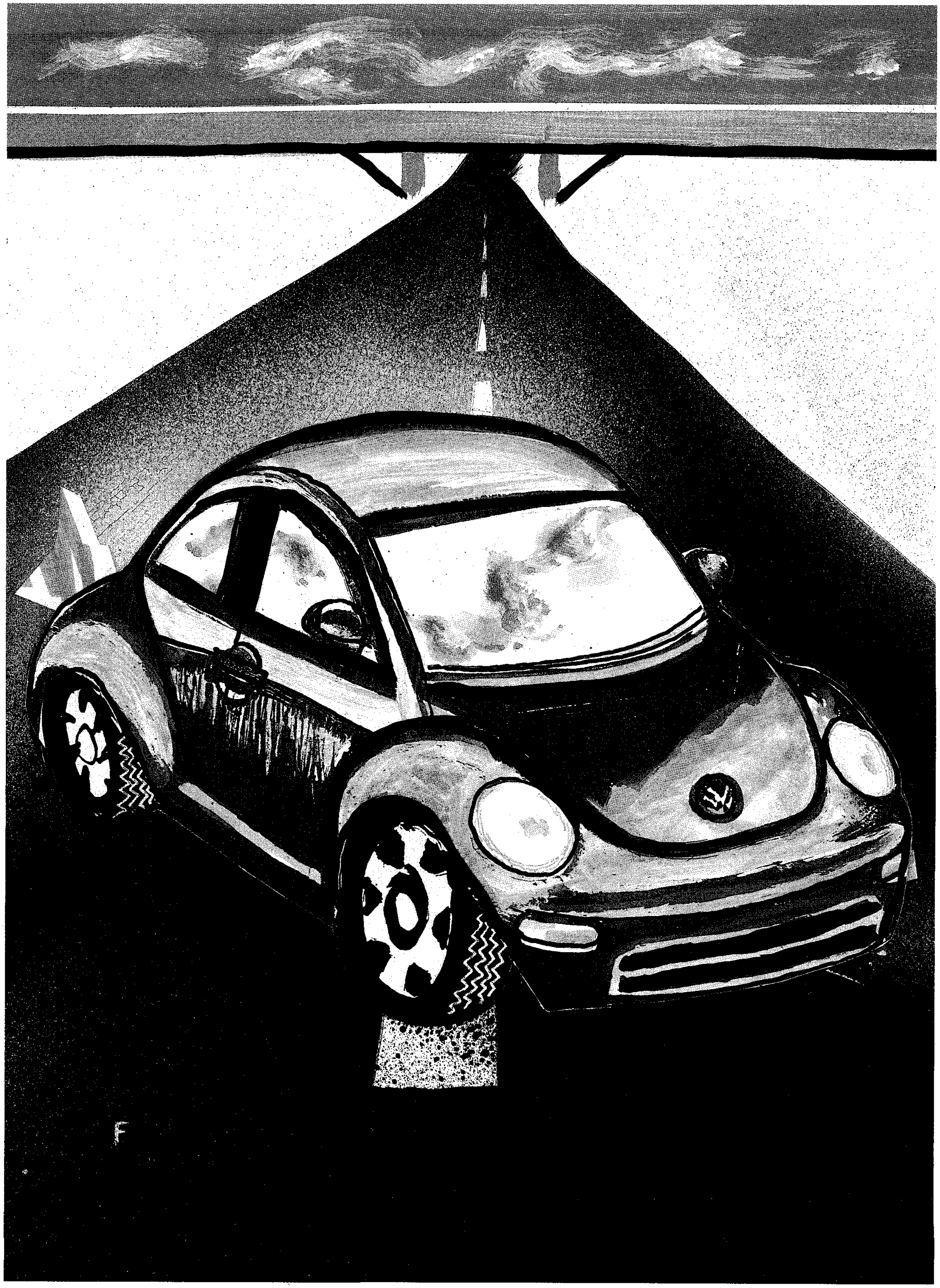
Mays, though, is the sort of car designer who thinks not just about cars but about culture. He told a reporter from one of the automobile magazines, "Well, I think pop culture is the only culture we have left, isn't it? . . . As much as [the Beetle] is an icon, it is also a huge piece of our pop culture." His collaborator, Freeman Thomas, calls the New Beetle's design "a blend of retro and modern, a warm Bauhaus."

The car that emerged from their sketches is sleeker than the original Beetle, and is full of up-to-the-minute safety features and amenities (unlike the original Beetle, it has heat); the curves of its front and back are more rounded; and it has such uncarlike curiosities as a bud vase in the dashboard to play on the original Beetle's connection to the counterculture of the sixties. It looks almost like a cartoon version of the old Beetle, and that may be why, when people see it, they seem unable to suppress a smile. This car replaces the aura of German engineering with the allure of a puppy.

When the car was first designed, no one, not even Mays and Thomas, expected it to be manufactured. It was created for promotional purposes, to be displayed as a concept car, or what used to be called a dream car. But the New Beetle, which was originally called Concept One, was not, like most concept cars, some futuristic object. When the bright-yellow Concept One first appeared in public, at the Detroit auto show in 1994, it was seen unmistakably as an homage to Volkswagen's past, and many of the company's executives, who felt that the legacy of the Beetle hung too heavily over the company already, were uneasy. But, as Steve Keyes, a Volkswagen publicist, remembers, "we were overwhelmed by the emotional response." Within the year, the company announced its intention to turn Mays and Thomas's design into a real car. It was an unprecedented moment in the automotive industry: a car that was conceived not by marketing experts but by designers had forced its way, by the sheer power of its design, into the marketplace.

—PAUL GOLDBERGER

FILIP PAGOWSKI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themselves and each other and either ascend into greater daring or sink back into timidity. Those notions are certainly present in nascent form in "Barbary Shore" and "The Deer Park," but writing "The White Negro" in 1957 seems to have freed up Mailer's style. As he moved into the sixties, his voice took into itself more and more disruptive and contradictory elements: excrement yoked to metaphysical speculation, technology consorting with the Devil—all of it tied together by increasingly ambitious metaphors seeking out the hidden connections among things. It was the time of Mailer's time: his protests against conformity had helped create the adversary culture of the sixties. He could have easily ridden a continuous wave of liberal and countercultural approval—and then drowned, as a writer, in charlatanry. But what so excited those of us who began reading him at the time was the way that any given assertion seemed to contain within it the possibility of its opposite. His intellectual aggressions refused the lure of simplemindedness; he could not be taken in by his own side.

Mailer wrote two erotically hypercharged novels in this period, "The American Dream" and "Why Are We in Vietnam?," but, as the country's mood became hotly contentious, he began writing an expansive new form of journalism, which, for its evocative power and philosophical reach, has never been equalled. His friend Dwight Macdonald had told him to "look to the feel of the phenomenon," and Mailer, responding with all his senses, dissolved any distinction between objective and subjective ways of reportage. He was fearless where others were circumspect, recording, for instance, the disdain of the new Black Power advocates for their white allies and the intimidated dismay it provoked:

> These Blacks moved through the New Left with a physical indifference to the bodies about them, as if ten Blacks could handle any hundred of these flaccid Whites. . . . Their hair carefully brushed out in every direction like African guerrillas or huge radar stations on some lonely isle, they seemed to communicate with one another in ten dozen modes, with fingers like deaf and dumb, with feet, with their stance, by the flick of their long wrist, with the radar of their hair, the smoke of their will, the glide of their passage, by a laugh, a nod, a disembodied gesture, through mediums, seeming to speak through silent mediums among them who never gave hint to a sign.

This Whitmanesque passage, which dares racism and exuberantly transcends it, is taken from Mailer's most famous book of the sixties, "The Armies of the Night," in which he made an account of a "symbolic" event whose glory was inseparable from its foolishness. "Armies" is a chronicle of the frantic three days in October, 1967, when a superb American ragtag of old and new leftists, hippies and intellectuals, liberal academics and frivolous free-lovers descended on Washington in a quixotic protest against the Vietnam War. By any historical measure, the March on the Pentagon was no more than one of many theatrically bizarre events characteristic of a time marked by extremes of disgust and exhilaration. But because of Mailer's book it has become one of the principal ways that people know the period. It is Mailer's equivalent to Orwell's "Homage to Catalonia."

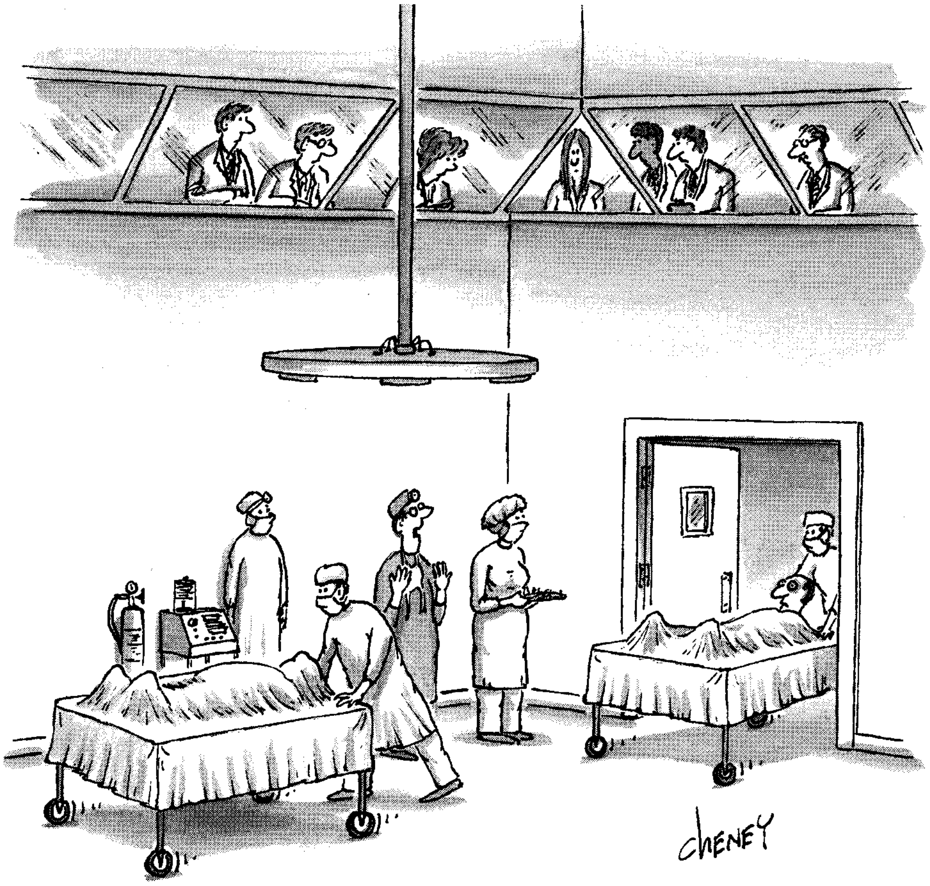
In "The Armies of the Night," Mailer created a protagonist called "Mailer" who embodied the contradictions of the moment. No longer young, his eye very much on celebrity, "Mailer" drags himself, against his will, to Washington, and the night before the march makes a horse's ass of himself in a drunken speech. Mailer the author, however, is anything but drunk: he gives an account of the event that is absolutely lucid in its description of both the speechifying lout and other celebrated people (including Macdonald and Robert Lowell) perturbed by the messy goings on. If the actor is crazy, the recording angel is sternly sane, and the literary form of the book becomes a perfect metaphor of the way sixties people intentionally made fools of themselves in a state of earnest concern bordering on anguish. "Mailer," pulling himself together two days after the speech, charges a line of United States marshals and manages to get himself arrested, but the author Mailer is still, he insists, not a hero but a comic hero, a bourgeois revolutionary devoted to booze and body comfort who nevertheless longs for bravery, transcendence, and mental clarity. Mailer had found a voice so rich and flexible that he might have stuck with it forever.

In Provincetown, the day's work is over, and Mailer—drink in hand—has welcomed guests and now plants himself in the living room with his back to a dormant fireplace. As he sits on a low chair, his hands on his haunches, there is something baronial and demanding in the pose, a nearly medieval expectation of large, indecent pleasure; his manner evokes raised flagons, a roasted boar, revels in some upstairs room. As advertised, he doesn't drink much (a little Glenlivet, over ice, will do), but the moment before dinner is still a time of high sociability. A Provincetown friend, Lucy Nathanson, has joined us, and Mailer shouts and carries on, and, in too exquisite French, offers mock invitations to dine. At the table, he flirts with the guests, catches up on gossip and the news—but then he suddenly falls silent to listen. When anyone has something to say, Mailer's pale-blue eyes, slightly recessive under thick brows, fix on the speaker, his forehead shows its furrows, and his mouth seems to grow smaller: he has the peculiar intensity, absolutely still, of a great doctor boring in on a patient who is at last coming to the point.

Mailer expresses disapproval of President Clinton's unwillingness simply to "admit his affair with Monica Lewinsky and get on with it." Everyone agrees that the anger of media commentators and investigative reporters regarding Clinton suggests that their sense of their *own* importance was violated by the President's buoyant poll numbers. A nerve has been touched.

"One of the horrors of the late twentieth century," Mailer bursts out, "is precisely this incredible emphasis on acumen. People hate you if they think you're going to do something and you don't fulfill their acumen, and you show that they were wrong about you. They can't bear that. And also, if they think you're through, and you're not through, they can't endure that, because, if they're not right in their acumen, what are they good for? The media are entirely a study in acumen. Who rises in the media? The guy who's right ninety per cent of the time on matters on which you should be right ninety per cent of the time. But very few people can leap through the anxiety of being right nine times out of ten on easy questions. They begin to panic, and they make mistakes. For them, it's hateful when they're wrong—hateful. So by just surviving I'm getting back at my enemies."

"Acumen," clearly, harasses a writer who has major ambition; he can never escape the fear of being kneecapped by some expert who is vain of his information but indifferent to the perils of imagination. At seventy-five, Mailer has arrived at a point of balance in his life. He is older, but he is not old. He has accumulated the usual scars and stumping irritations of any general in the arts soldiering through his eighth decade. But underneath the crust of habit and attitude he's as ardent and springing as a young girl who has just noticed the moonlight. Mailer is well informed on many subjects, but he's an enthusiast, not an inside dopester. Casual conversation with him is likely to shift very rapidly to ritualistic, detailed praise, the citing of heroes: Fidel Castro in the hills before the revolution; Sonny Rollins playing like crazy in some Village jazz spot; the crosswind abilities of the young pilots flying small planes into Provincetown. He responds to everything—Mozart is an unlikely new interest—and I notice again and again that at this stage of his life he prefers to hear good things about other people, particularly young writers. Rage and combativeness have always been major elements in Mailer's temperament, but petty malice—the running water of New York literary-journalistic chatter—is not his style. He wants attention as much as ever, but he shrugs off compliments now, and insists on the superiority of Hemingway and Henry Miller.

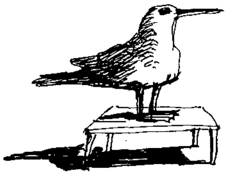


"Next, an example of the very same procedure when done correctly."

It's the nineties, and nice is the prevailing mode, so that even when I bait the hook by mentioning—none too subtly—Gore Vidal, a longtime tormentor who once put Mailer in the same league as Charles Manson, Mailer refuses to bite: with the ardor of Solomon, he struggles to be fair to Vidal. "He's a redoubtable enemy, and a most moderate friend," Mailer tells me. "But what the hell. We're not living as neighbors." Later, when the subject of Vidal comes up again, Mailer says, "He's a scourge—Gore's a scourge who will permit no one to get by with less than what he considers to be the ideal. I don't want to end up with a sort of Hindu variety of laissez-faire, but Gore kills a lot of people he shouldn't kill and takes care of a good many people who should be taken care of. So let history draw the balance on him."

• •

YEARS ago, a writer I know who was then a reporter for the *Harvard Crimson* threw a drunken fit in the newspaper offices and punched a door, smashing the bones in his hand. A few days later, the reporter—his hand voluminously bandaged—showed up at Mailer's house in Brooklyn to interview the author, and, upon seeing him, Mailer said, "Didja punch a door?"



Mailer has always understood the need for pride in men; he has understood it as he's understood it in himself—as intimately connected to foolishness and vainglory. Whether that understanding also extended to a woman's need for pride was not, for many years, a question that could be answered happily. In 1971, after spending a decade covering politics, Mailer took up the one successful revolution of the time. In an extraordinarily painful and funny polemic, "The Prisoner of Sex," he raged against the radical feminists. By the end of the book, however, he was ready to bless the liberated woman:

> Let her travel to the moon, write the great American novel, and allow her husband to send her off to work with her lunch pail and a cigar; she could kiss the cooze of forty-one Rockettes in Macy's store window; she could legislate, incarcerate, and wear a uniform; she could die of every male disease, and years of burden was the first, for she might learn that women worked at onerous duties and men worked for egos which were worse than onerous and often insane. So women could have the right to die of men's diseases, yes, and might try to live with men's egos in their own skull case and he would cheer them on their way—would he? Yes, he thought that perhaps they may as well do what they desired if the anger of the centuries was having its say.

It was a fine moment. But when I ask him now, in 1998, how he felt about women's liberation when the revolution first began to gather steam, roughly thirty years ago, he answers, "Like the British when they lost India." It's clear, I think, that he now honors pride in women, but Mailer the sexual imperialist suffered, and continues to suffer, more than a little. When he speaks of India, he means that he's frightened by the danger that men will lose their co-starring role in conceiving a child, their purchase on the womb, which he has always written about with awe.

Again and again, he has railed against the sexual act undertaken without the possibility of conception. Mailer's hatred of contraception is his most widely ridiculed opinion: men have opposed it as much as women have. One needs to add, however, that his loathing of contraception is part of his distaste in general for technology's many intrusions into nature. He has always thundered against anything that shielded Americans from the rawness of direct experience—psychoanalysis, TV sitcoms, plastic everywhere, replacing organic materials like stone and wood. He is a warning voice against spiritual enfeeblement, in the apocalyptic vein of D. H. Lawrence. But what Mailer loathes most of all is technology's brute presence in the sacred bond of men and women. In "The Prisoner of Sex," he wrote that he was appalled by the radical-feminist support for out-of-uterine conception, and he received with alarm the news that a vibrator, in the Masters and Johnson clinic, had triumphantly provided women with the orgasms they were not getting in sex with their husbands. Radical feminism frightened Mailer by offering a vision of the disposability of the male.

At seventy-five, Mailer is split. One part of him grudgingly accepts women's liberation; the other part is a critic who won't let go. "You have to ask yourself," he tells me, "'Why was that revolution so successful?' It worked for a very good reason. It was perfect for the corporation." The corporation, in Mailerian theology, is technology's mother—the destroyer of essential independence and energy. "You get on the shuttle from Boston to New York, and what do you see? You see a group of women wearing tailored suits, carrying their laptop computers, and they look like female versions of the men, and they're working for the corporation, and they're proud of working for the corporation, and where in the old days men used to feel a small sense of shame—they really felt this was not the way to live, this was an empty life and it was destroying something in them that they couldn't quite name—the women rush to it. They have become the gilt-edged peons of the corporation."

The miseries and glories of Mailer's life with five previous wives have long fascinated columnists and biographers. As far as anyone can see, however, he has finally found contentment with Norris Church. She is a former model—she stands a full head taller than her husband—whom he met in 1975. Church, whose eyes narrow wickedly when she's amused, has been painting for years (and recently she has also begun writing plays and fiction). The next morning, when the house is quiet, she shows me some of her paintings of Mailer. One of the pictures is a glamorous portrait of her husband with electric hair and the piercing eyes of a blue-eyed devil. In another, Mailer, Church, and a Cuban friend are sitting side by side in a Havana bar, and Mailer looks heavy. "It is a wife's revenge on her aging husband," Mailer says, joining us. When Church fusses over Mailer—buttoning him up on his way out the door on a cold day—he stamps and roars in mock protest. But he also tells me, "She's all right," with a rising inflection of approval, like Bogart offering tribute to Bacall. The couple have been together twenty-three years, and have nine children between them from different relationships, including their twenty-year-old son, John, a lanky young man with a bit of beard at his chin, who was home from Wesleyan for a few days. In the living room, table after table is filled with family pictures—children at various stages of their lives in twos or threes, children surrounding Church and Mailer on summer visits. In some of them, Mailer stands bare-chested in a bathing suit, a domestic Triton commanding the beach.

At breakfast, Mailer eats oranges and dark bread and butter, and talks of Muhammad Ali's training schedule and the athletic daring of the younger Kennedy children. Where does his stamina come from? He has written, aside from the anthology, thirty books; he has renewed himself many times. He could have continued forever in the gloriously baroque style perfected in "Armies" and extended into "Miami and the Siege of Chicago," his account of the 1968 Conventions, including the police riot on Michigan Avenue—a book that was not a high-spirited entertainment like "Armies" but instead was more troubled, closer to tragedy. He embraced metaphysical speculation in "Of a Fire on the Moon," a report on the 1969 moonshot, which was eclipsed in popularity by Tom Wolfe's much less complex and demanding "The Right Stuff." Going from baroque to rococo, Mailer dipped into mysticism in the notorious "Marilyn," a coffee-table book that has some dubious passages and much interpretative effrontery but is certainly the only star bio that I have read with pleasure twice. Then, in 1979, Mailer issued a long book written like this:

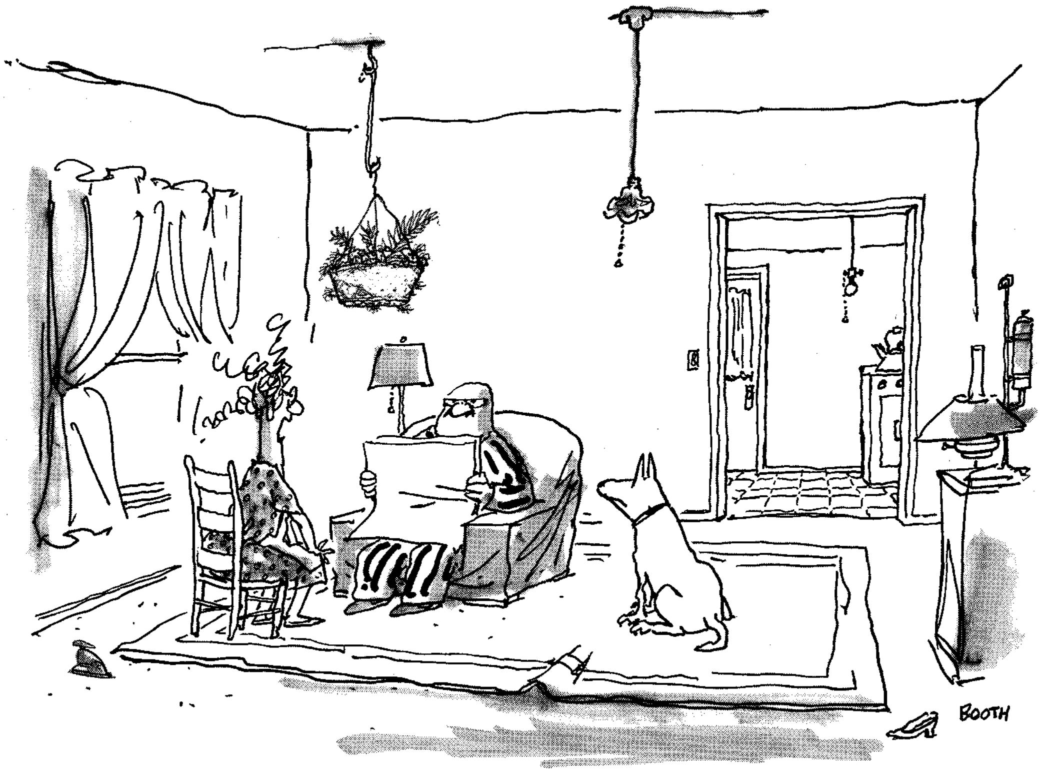
> He finally asked her what she'd been doing. I, Nicole said, have been sitting on my ass over at my mother's. I didn't have enough gas to come back, so I had to stay there all the goddamn day. "Yes," she told him, "I've been sitting on my ass." Well, he told her, something feels different in the house than when I left this morning. Were you back here today?
>
> Yeah, I got back here today, she answered. I thought you were sitting on your ass over at your mother's all day, he said. She gave a smile and said, That's exactly what I said.
>
> Gary walked over from the car, looking as casual as if he was going into the house, and when he passed, he slapped her fronthanded across the face. Pretty sneaky. Her head was ringing like an alarm clock.

The passage is continuous: "The Executioner's Song" is composed entirely of short paragraphs with gaps between them. At the time, the shock of reading the book—Mailer's "true life novel" about the murderer Gary Gilmore, who chose to die in front of a firing squad—was extreme. Mailer, whose sentences had gone on forever, embracing and connecting everything, now restricted himself to a limited vocabulary and the subtle rhythmic possibilities of plain English syntax. The silence he inserted between paragraphs is a terrifying device, a cruel push into nowhere, from which we are saved by the next short paragraph, only to be pushed again.

"The Executioner's Song," which was written in collaboration with his researcher Lawrence Schiller, is one of Mailer's unassailable classics; it is also an example of a severe artistic self-chastening. "Everyone was saying that I could only write in a baroque style," he tells me. But he may also have been responding to a massive cultural shift. The voice that so electrified young men thirty years ago came as a turbulent development in Mailer's war with America and with himself; it was the greatest reach of a persistent rebellion going back to the fifties. But by the seventies it may have become clear to him that "rebellion" was no longer possible in the way he had imagined earlier. In "The White Negro," Mailer had thought, for instance, that Negro consciousness, as it was embodied not only in blacks but in the white hipster, could amount to a potentially revolutionary force in America. But he underestimated the perverse wit, the encompassing and flattening power of American capitalism. It turned out that capitalism, armed with its media spear of advertising, was fully capable of incorporating into itself rebellion as a life style, black consciousness as a pop-culture and consumer fashion, and hipsterism as a joking irony that ridiculed the act of selling even as it sold everything to everybody. No wonder Mailer so execrated the corporation as the grave of women's liberation.

By the late seventies, rebellion had been cheapened, or made nearly impossible, and the embattled self had begun to look a little melodramatic, even quaint, and so Mailer escaped into a flatter, more direct style, and then into other worlds—ancient Egypt and Galilee—that were as far from corporate America as possible. Now he is gearing up to return to the C.I.A. and to the unfinished "Harlot's Ghost." It turns out that the anthology—for which "Harlot's Ghost" serves as what its author calls "the keel"—is Mailer's ship sailing into the future.

Mailer, who is probably the most adventurous and lavishly gifted of American postwar writers, fell out of fashion when he refused irony and postmodernist play. Through all his changes, he has remained a Balzacian social chronicler and an earnest patriot, looking to claim the heart of his country. In the end, Gore Vidal may have been wrong when he called Mailer, in 1960, "a Bolingbroke, a born usurper." On the border of old age, Mailer appears to have rejected thoughts of the crown and to have found it more satisfying to think of himself as a contender. As we drive to the airport, and he comments on the bare yet comforting landscape of Provincetown, I remember that the day before he had said he couldn't write an autobiographical novel because he didn't consider himself the hero of his own life. He had summed up his present state of mind in this way: "About the time that you obtain some wisdom, and you become mellow, like Camembert—about that time you also can smell yourself just a little. You didn't die for any cause, did you? You're not a protagonist—you're the guy that's left at the end. At this point, however, I'd hate to think that it's over." ♦



"One of your eyes is bugged out farther than the other one."

ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

IN THE COMPANY OF WOMEN

Behaving like a woman was supposed to be bad for business, but the female executives of the entertainment and information industries are turning it to their advantage.

BY KEN AULETTA

THIS past January, a dozen or so ABC executives went on a retreat in rural Connecticut. The group was supposed to talk about "branding," among other strategic issues, and at one point Geraldine Laybourne, the president of Disney/ABC Cable Networks, found that she was championing one side of a question while most of the men in the room were arrayed against her.

Laybourne, although one of the most powerful executives in the entertainment industry, is not a forbidding figure. A fifty-year-old former schoolteacher, she wears large, round green eyeglasses, usually dresses in softly cut pastels, and speaks deliberately, in a low voice. Laybourne founded Nick at Night, and was the first president of Nickelodeon, the children's cable channel; since joining Disney, in February, 1996, she has supervised most cable programming, including the Disney Channel, and ABC's interests in Lifetime, A&E, the History Channel, and E! Entertainment Television. This season, thanks to her programming changes, ABC is in a first-place tie with Fox in children's Saturday-morning programming. Yet each time Laybourne spoke at the retreat, she recalls, "I felt I was just not being heard." The branding discussion continued as if she weren't there, and she was angry. That evening, when everyone got together for pre-

The executives. Top row: Judy McGrath, Jane Friedman, Sarah Crichton; middle row: Shelly Lazarus, Debby Krenek, Kay Koplovitz, Geraldine Laybourne, Cathleen Black; front row: Lynda Obst, Kim Polese, Laura Ziskin, Esther Dyson.

dinner cocktails, Laybourne marched into the room where drinks were being served and said, "Am I just the biggest ass in the world?" No, no, her colleagues protested. It was great that she persisted, they declared, even if they didn't necessarily agree with her position.

If this had been a roomful of women executives, Laybourne might have been able to read them. Women tend to lean forward when they speak, and to touch, quickly sharing intimacies. But men, as she sees them, are more opaque, less demonstrative. Being a female executive is "like being a Frenchman in America," she told me once, in another context. "It's speaking a foreign language."

Talking later about her experience at the retreat, Laybourne said, "I should actually take a breath to test the temperature, and ask, 'Is there any common ground?' I should be careful I am not making assumptions." And, as if to challenge her assumptions, at the conclusion of the retreat Robert Iger, the president of ABC, whom Laybourne is close to, appointed her to lead one of two branding task forces. Had she misread the men in the room?

Not necessarily. Over the past few months, I talked with nearly three dozen female executives from the upper ranks of Hollywood studios, television networks, music companies, Silicon Valley corporations, advertising agencies, and publishing. I asked each of the women similar questions: Do women manage differently from men? Are female executives treated differently? Do women feel compelled to act more like men in order to overcome stereotypes? If women have some superior qualities, do men have some as well?

The survey was more anecdotal than scientific, but in conducting it I heard things that these executives rarely share with male peers. I heard them say that women are better managers—more nurturing, more collegial, more communicative, and more instinctual—and that these strengths mesh better with the corporate culture of teamwork and partnering which is emblematic of the information age. And as women gain authority, most of them believe, our movies, our music, our television, our software, and our other communications products will improve.

These women remain a distinct minority: only two female C.E.O.s of major communications companies come to mind—Shelly Lazarus, of the world's sixth-largest advertising agency, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, and Marjorie Scardino, of Pearson P.L.C., a multimedia giant based in London. (Scardino declined to be interviewed.) Barely eleven per cent of the eleven thousand corporate officers of the Fortune 500 companies are women. And among the seventeen hundred and fifty corporate, government, academic, and media leaders who early this year attended the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, just over a hundred were

Top row: Lucy Fisher, Michele Anthony, Maggie Wilderotter, Patty Stonesifer, Stacey Snider, Anne Sweeney; middle row: Amy Pascal, Anita Addison, Mary Ann Byrnes; front row: Caryn Mandabach, Marcy Carsey, Paula Weinstein. Photographs by Mary Ellen Mark.

females. "I've always been sort of fascinated when you look at the financial community and you look at who gets invited to financial conferences—you'll see almost no women," Kay Koplovitz, the outgoing chairwoman and C.E.O. of USA Networks, says.

But, if female C.E.O.s are scarce, a great many women are now represented at the highest corporate levels. Seven women are in top decision-making positions at five movie studios (Amy Pascal, of Columbia Pictures, and Sherry Lansing, of Paramount, are two examples); women like Sarah Crichton and Jane Friedman play dominant roles in book publishing; women like Patty Stonesifer, formerly of Microsoft (and now running the Gates Library Foundation), and Mary Ann Byrnes, the president and C.E.O. of Corsair Communications, are powers in Silicon Valley; women now edit more than a few large newspapers (Debby Krenek, the editor-in-chief of the New York *Daily News*, is one example); and Cathleen P. Black, the president of Hearst Magazines, says, "I don't go to a meeting where half the executives are not women." In the television industry, women hold key positions in the entertainment divisions of six broadcast networks.

Most of these women believe that their gender gives them innate advantages. And most of these women believe that gender-based differences for which they were once belittled have become distinct advantages. For example, Laura Ziskin, the president of Fox 2000, which is a feature-film division of Twentieth Century Fox, remembers trying to sign an important actress to a contract: "I called the head of my business affairs at Fox. A guy I adore. And I asked if he had spoken to the actress's agent. Also a man. And he said, 'I called him and he owes me a call.' I called Lynda"—Lynda Obst, the Hollywood producer—"and I said, 'It's astonishing. As women, if you want to get something done you call the guy until you get him. Would you sit and wait three days for the guy to call you back? No, you'd get on the phone. You'd call until they talked to you. But the men say, 'I don't call him until he calls me. I called him, now he has to call me back.' It is a kind of a dick thing! With men, everything is a contest, a battle. Women are mediators."

THE belief that women have certain gender-based advantages has long been debated in the field of feminist anthropology, as books with titles like "The Feminization of America" have become commonplace. The Harvard entomologist E. O. Wilson's "Sociobiology: The New Synthesis," published in the seventies, upset first-wave feminists, who rebelled against the implication that gender roles might be genetically determined. But in subsequent years many feminists came to embrace such ideas, which fit their own growing confidence in the biological advantages of women. In all this work, there is a good deal of the evolutionary savanna—man the hunter, woman the child-bearer, that sort of thing. Helen E. Fisher, an anthropologist at Rutgers, traces behavioral differences back to the origins of the human species, and cites studies demonstrating that female chimpanzees "are twenty times less likely to bicker over rank." When I visited Fisher recently, in an apartment-office she has in Manhattan, she greeted me sunnily. "Males are much more likely to take orders as well as give orders," she said. "Women look around." Fisher went on to say that "the root of this difference is partly chemical," and explained that since the average male carries seven to ten times as much testosterone as the average female, it is not surprising that men appear to care more about rank and about winning. "I don't think our corporate structure comes from childhood," Fisher added. "I believe most gender differences come out of nature."

Fisher's ethological arguments, drawn from evolutionary psychology, emphasize gender differences in attitudes toward hierarchy. The Harvard professor Carol Gilligan suggests that "relationships, and particularly issues of dependency, are experienced differently by women and men." In her widely read 1982 book, "In a Different Voice," she argued that "males tend to have difficulty with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation."

Today, none of these discussions are limited to the halls of academe. Rather, after nearly thirty years of debate over gender questions, modern women have begun to theorize about their own uneasy roles, almost as if they were amateur ethnographers

"Wait, those weren't lies. That was spin!"

themselves. Put another way, it is as if women in these traditionally male redoubts have found themselves to be not only trailblazing executives but sexual naturalists.

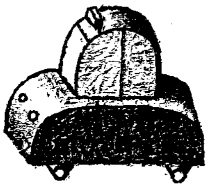
The Internet pioneer Esther Dyson, the chairwoman of EDventure Holdings, which focusses on emerging information technology around the world, says, "The men are trying to do all this explicit, hierarchical, formal stuff. They follow job titles. Women pay more attention to human factors. As girls, they get dolls to talk." And Amy Pascal, the president of Columbia Pictures, says, "I manage from a place—how my employees are feeling—and men don't do that. We're trained in the art of compromise, and men aren't. We learn as girls. I think I am much more attuned to people's feelings. That's a good thing and a bad thing. I can read my employees' faces about how something has gone down with them. I think I can motivate them and talk to them in a more straightforward way. But I probably dwell too much in that place. I probably care too much when I should just be colder about it."

Ann S. Moore, who is the president of Time Warner's *People*, probably the most profitable magazine in the world, says, "I think I probably use less of what I learned at the Harvard Business School and more of what I learned as a parent. I think the single best thing to equip you for management in the Fortune 500 is good parenting skills. Everything from 'Nobody loves a whiner' to 'Look both ways' or 'Do your homework' or 'Say thank you.'" (To be sure, this approach owes something to touchy-feely New Age trends, too.)

Geraldine Laybourne believes that it is possible to carve out a separate and distinctive, "team managed" culture within a larger corporate culture. She did this at Viacom, when she took over Nickelodeon, recruiting a team of female managers and educators, led by Anne Sweeney, who had just received a graduate degree in education from Harvard (and now works for Laybourne as the president of the Disney Channel). Laybourne brought her two children to the office and was unabashed about using them (and other kids) to conduct market research for her children's network. She created an environment in which the Laybourne team felt like entrepreneurs, running their own company.

Today, like a shrewd parent, Laybourne begins her weekly staff meeting with a blank easel rather than a set agenda. "Then we look at it and say, 'Which problems do we need to solve today?'" Laybourne says. "You get the issues out real quickly. What happens in a hierarchically run meeting is that the burden is completely on the C.E.O. My job is not to make decisions in a vacuum but to be a vacuum cleaner."

As I talked to these women, I kept encountering female swagger, consisting of equal parts experience, anger, pride, insecurity, and playfulness—and a belief that women enjoy a gender advantage.



Marcy Carsey and Caryn Mandabach, two of three partners in Carsey-Werner (the third is a man, Tom Werner), which has been perhaps the most successful independent television-production house since 1984, when it produced "The Cosby Show," are as casual at work as if they were in their own living room. Like many people of both sexes in the television business, they like underdressing, in baggy outfits, and putting their loafers on the couches in bungalow offices they've rented on the CBS lot in Studio City. As if they were writing an episode of "Roseanne" (another of their hit shows), they like to sit around making fun of men. According to Carsey, "Men gravitate toward the power concept: 'How many people report to me? What do I reign over? How visible am I?'" Men love offices, they assert, and women don't. "There's a desk that you can sit behind, kind of a power spot," Carsey says. "There's a chair that's kind of made of leather. There's a view. There's a uniform you wear, and it has a tie and a shirt and a suit—brown or black. You feel that you put on your uniform, you come to your power place, and you know who you are and you're safe."

"And they find comfort in that," Mandabach says, "whereas I don't think women would. Every woman I know would be so happy if she could live in a place and work in a place where she could wear a muumuu and no bra, and where there was no desk, and she could sit on the floor with her legs crossed, and there are only couches, and tea is being poured."

Instead of an office with a large desk, Lucy Fisher, the vice-chairwoman of Sony's Columbia TriStar Motion Picture Group, often works out of what looks like a living room. "My management style is very collegial," she says. "This room is my, quote, conference room, while everyone else's, quote, conference room has a big, long table in it and a bunch of chairs sitting around the table. This is my living room. Two couches and two chairs." Inside a credenza are toys, which her three children often play with after school.

Maggie Wilderotter, the president and C.E.O. of Wink Communications, which is developing interactive television software in its Alameda, California, headquarters, carries this management style another step—to going in search of ideas. Wilderotter, who was previously a cable-industry executive and then a telephone-company executive, likes to tell her staff, "I'm going on a lion hunt." She roams among her employees, who number ninety, seeking information and ideas. "I manage horizontally," she says. And Geraldine Laybourne was famous at Nickelodeon for having, instead of an office, just a desk in an open area—quite a remove from the nineteenth-century pyramidal company, in which clerical workers, mostly women, were found at the bottom.

Of course, women do not always play these parts or speak this language. The late Dawn Steel, who ran Columbia Pictures and was president of production at Paramount, verbally mugged more than a few underlings. Her friend the producer Paula Weinstein, who once was a script reader for Jane Fonda and became a key executive at several studios, says simply, "Insecure men, or women, will behave the same."

Some women—Linda Wachner, the chairwoman and C.E.O. of Warnaco, and Gabriella Forte, the president and C.O.O. of Calvin Klein—manage hierarchically. "There are as many differences in the way women manage as there are in the way men manage," Sherry Lansing, the chairwoman and C.E.O. of Paramount Pictures, says. "I know men who are incredibly nurturing and collegial and supportive, and I know men who are soft-spoken and calm. And I know women who are screamers."

Shelly Lazarus, of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, like Sherry Lansing, is dubious about the notion that gender differences exist in management techniques. Nevertheless, she believes that women who have children become better managers—the nurture thesis. "I think children ground women emotionally," she says. "They can separate what's important from what's not important. They're better managers. They're better in sorting priorities. They're better in dealing with people."

WITH all this insistence on certain advantages, were female executives prepared to argue that male executives possess skills that female executives lack? A prominent male executive at a major communications company, who insisted on anonymity, breached political correctness by saying, "Women are more emotional."

A number of women challenged this observation; those who did concede the point that women are more emotional went on to maintain that this presumed deficiency is actually an advantage. Amy Pascal, of Columbia Pictures, says, "I take it personally when things don't work out." Caryn Mandabach is more disdainful, saying, "Yes, we're more emotional. It's a good thing. How can you talk about communication and not be emotional?"

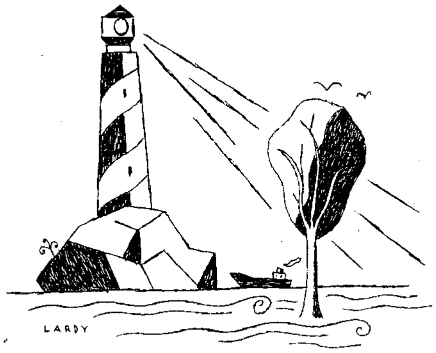
Several female executives believe that men are better at making decisions. "I'm horrible at firing people," Pascal says. "I overempathize so much. I delay saying it." She adds that women are often not as "cold" in making decisions.

"I have people accuse me of being tough," Laura Ziskin says, and goes on, "I'm a wimp. When someone comes in with a story they are passionate about and I'm going to sit in judgment, I feel awful. I hate to say no to people I like. . . . I hate it. It makes me physically ill."

Agonizing over ambiguity is a good thing, declares Michele Anthony, the executive vice-president of Sony Music Entertainment. "Sometimes maybe it is better to blindly govern without emotion and sensitivity. It makes decisions easier. There are decisions I agonize over because I take other people's feelings into account. I don't think men are more decisive. I think we're as capable of making decisions as quickly as men. But we decide differently. The grays help you make a better decision. And sometimes, because of the process that women often follow, the decisions are better ones."

BECAUSE of real or perceived weaknesses, women often believe that they have to behave more like men, or, more precisely, in the way that they think men behave. Jane Rosenthal, a producer and a co-founder, with Robert De Niro, of Tribeca Productions, says that she faces this dilemma. "Sometimes I feel I have to be tougher, to show authority," she says. "I have a little girl's voice, so sometimes I will say certain things to get a point across. I feel as if I were being difficult at times. And then I find myself saying, 'But this isn't me!' " In her book "Hello, He Lied: and Other Truths from the Hollywood Trenches," Lynda Obst writes of a naïve "gender lens" that distorts what women see: "Everyday, run-of-the-mill business junk in Hollywood—like simple lying—astonishes women, leaves us speechless, and we take it personally." Of herself, Obst told me, "I like to tell everything." Yet she worries about men looking for weakness. She says she has to worry about losing her temper (she admits that she screamed too much when she was younger), because "it's terrifying in a woman and unacceptable, whereas it's expected and de rigueur for a man. It's easier for men to deal with a formidable daddy than with a scary mom."

Jane Friedman describes her unnerving introduction to becoming the boss: "When I first came here, last year"—as the president and C.E.O. of HarperCollins Publishers—"I would say 'Good morning' and leave my door open and talk to my assistants. I soon realized, They think they can get away with stuff because I don't act like a dictator. I realized after the first month that I had to make sure people understood that I meant what I said. I came in assuming I would just be who I'd been for thirty years"—at Random House. "Everyone knew my shorthand. Here I had to speak much more forcefully. It's lonely. There's no one to talk to. Everyone reports to you. No one is a friend."



Women say that they compensate for such loneliness in various ways. "For me it is knowing, most of the time, what I think and sticking to it, while appearing to be open," Amy Pascal says. On being told that this sounded as if she were being manipulative, she answers, "Women's power is a little more manipulative than men's. I don't always need things to be my idea, or to be right, as men do all the time. But women are trained to be manipulative. We appear to let someone else have won. Most men I know need you to recognize that they won. Men are more fragile."

Anita Addison, a vice-president for drama development at CBS Entertainment, points out that the women there are in charge of such areas as miniseries, business affairs, and broadcast standards. "I am not alone. I don't feel that I'm on this island by myself," she says. On the other hand, she says, "I am black, and it is assumed that most black people, and most black women, are angry. And therefore we're treated with a certain aloofness, a certain fear factor. Which I find amusing, but it can ultimately kind of work to one's advantage."

Helen Fisher, like Carol Gilligan, simply believes that women are hardwired with "a tremendous drive to seek consensus." And, for every impulse to regard such assertions with skepticism, there is a story of the sort Shelly Lazarus told me, after she had been on a family safari in Sabi Sabi, South Africa, in January. There, she says, she got to thinking about male testosterone when a guide boasted of the elephants that knock down trees. She asked why. "Because they can," he responded. "If I could knock down a tree, I would knock it down, too. It's a male thing." A month later, Lazarus was still thinking about that male guide. A woman, she says, “in a million years would never knock down a tree just because she could.”

As women move into traditional male roles—wage earner, soldier, senior executive, family head, sexual aggressor—the change, not surprisingly, makes some men uneasy. Lionel Tiger, the Charles Darwin Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers, says, “I think men are totally baffled by this, and don’t know how to respond.” He predicts a spiral of “downward mobility” for men, adding, “Women are going to be fine. It’s males that have a real problem.”

Men fight back in their own way, according to Stacey Snider, a co-president of production at Universal Pictures. She says, “There’s a reason there’s been a resurgence of golf and cigar smoking: we don’t do it.” In the early nineties, when she was the president of production at TriStar Pictures, she recalls that she was the only woman to attend executive retreats. “I knew intuitively that the guys couldn’t wait for me to go to bed. It wasn’t personal, but stuff happened after I went to bed.” Like what? “Talking about sports, talking about women, drinking, smoking cigars—you know, the tribal stuff. So that’s what I worry about: that I won’t get that experience and I won’t be in those rooms.” Snider has been talking with other ranking female executives throughout Hollywood about organizing “family friendly” retreats for women, their spouses, and their children. Not at a spa, she warns, because that “sounds . . . like we’ll sit around and do manicures.”

Geraldine Laybourne uses a sports analogy to portray men’s behavior: “Men who conduct meetings usually act like a pitcher, throwing lots of questions at various batters. It’s a way of maintaining the dominant position. It’s a game that’s played: ‘Look how smart I am!’ If the guys around the table are able to lob the ball back—and these are not deep questions; these are detailed questions, like Trivial Pursuit—if you can lob it back he sits up in his chair. I have a really hard time with that game. It doesn’t advance thinking. It isn’t about solving problems. It isn’t about building an organization of trust.”

“That’s cool. My parents never fight over me.”

It may also be that men fight back by condescending to women. At a meeting in London last year, a man is reported to have asked Marjorie Scardino, of Pearson P.L.C., “Would you please rise?” When Scardino politely did so, the man reportedly said, “I just wanted to see what you were wearing.”

Laybourne believes that women can navigate around such obstacles, although friends say she hasn’t always felt the same freedom at Disney that she did at Nickelodeon. She might make a presentation to Disney’s chairman, Michael Eisner—to develop a new channel for children, say—and, while Eisner will react with enthusiasm and creativity, the bean counters subsequently dampen her plans. Nevertheless, Laybourne believes that she has fashioned a distinctive culture within a culture. “We have met no resistance,” she says. “They judge us by our performance. Most companies care only about your performance.”

This sort of cultural and generational change may become more common as younger people rise. One female network executive in her early thirties says, “I have no difficulty communicating with males under thirty-five. But those guys”—men over thirty-five—“I rarely can easily communicate with. They don’t hear me.”

Judy McGrath, the forty-four-year-old president of MTV, thinks that a great shift has taken place among young people, and that this is being felt at the corporate level. “I always look to music to tell me what’s really going on,” she says, adding, “The economy’s great. There’s pop music. There’s happiness in the land. The fringes of music are very fringed, and kind of quiet. They haven’t moved into the mainstream yet.” MTV recently conducted a survey of cutting-edge kids—perhaps a look at the next wave of executives. What

MTV learned was that parents now ranked first among those the kids admired most, whereas five years ago parents were not mentioned at all. On being asked where they wanted to travel, the kids most often chose India and spiritual places. They preferred to listen to music alone and at home, rather than in clubs or with friends. McGrath sums up: "There is not an 'us versus them' mentality. It is a gentler, more optimistic group than we've seen in a while." Nor were there notable gender differences among those surveyed: "Girls, I think, are much more optimistic about their opportunities. They feel they can sidestep any obstacle. They feel they want to sidestep this whole glass-ceiling discussion."

It has been an article of faith among feminists that women in power would not produce as many testosterone-driven products as men do. "I'd like to say that it will change the variety of movies that we make," says Lynda Obst, who is in New York producing a movie directed by Ed Zwick. "I certainly think it will raise the quality of movies that we make. Women recognize character. I think you'll see less hollow characters. Women can't identify with a bimbo. So I think women's parts will be better. But I fear for the variety of movies that we make, because that's a market-driven question, not a president-of-production-driven question."

The writer-director Nora Ephron, whose movie "Sleepless in Seattle" grossed more than a hundred million dollars, observes, "Partly as a result of being disenfranchised, women executives have traditionally had to fight hard for things they believed in—as Amy Pascal did for 'Little Women' at Columbia. They read more and care more about stories, so they tend to concentrate more on good scripts, rather than follow the standard operating procedure these days, which is to rely on bankable male movie stars. The true philosophy in Hollywood is that nobody cares about what the above-the-line costs are, because the more they spend the safer they feel."

Sherry Lansing, of Paramount, has no doubt that women are already having a considerable impact on the communications business. "And, because we can green-light the movies now," she told me, "we can make 'The First Wives Club' and we can make 'Clueless.' There's a huge audience out there." Amy Pascal says, "I developed movies for women—relationship movies. . . . I've never been afraid of being a feminist, of pursuing women's talent. Now it's fantastic, because there's an entirely new audience of young women."

Yet one of Marjorie Scardino's early major acts as C.E.O. of Pearson was to spend about five hundred million dollars to acquire All American Communications, the owner of "Baywatch," a show in which women tend to wear skimpy bathing suits. Moreover, since about half a movie studio's revenues come from outside the United States, a female studio head confronts the same commercial pressures that men do.

Nora Ephron, for one, is skeptical about the degree of feminization women can bring to the marketplace. "They can become just as obsessed with casting big movie stars and making mindless product for overseas as the men are," she says. "Look. Half the studios in Hollywood are now run by women. But movies are no better. In fact, they're getting worse."

In other areas of the communications industry, women executives see several factors playing a more important role than gender. Shelly Lazarus, for example, believes, "Advertising will change, because the values of society have changed. If you look at a reel of commercials, I don't think you could tell if they were done by men or by women."

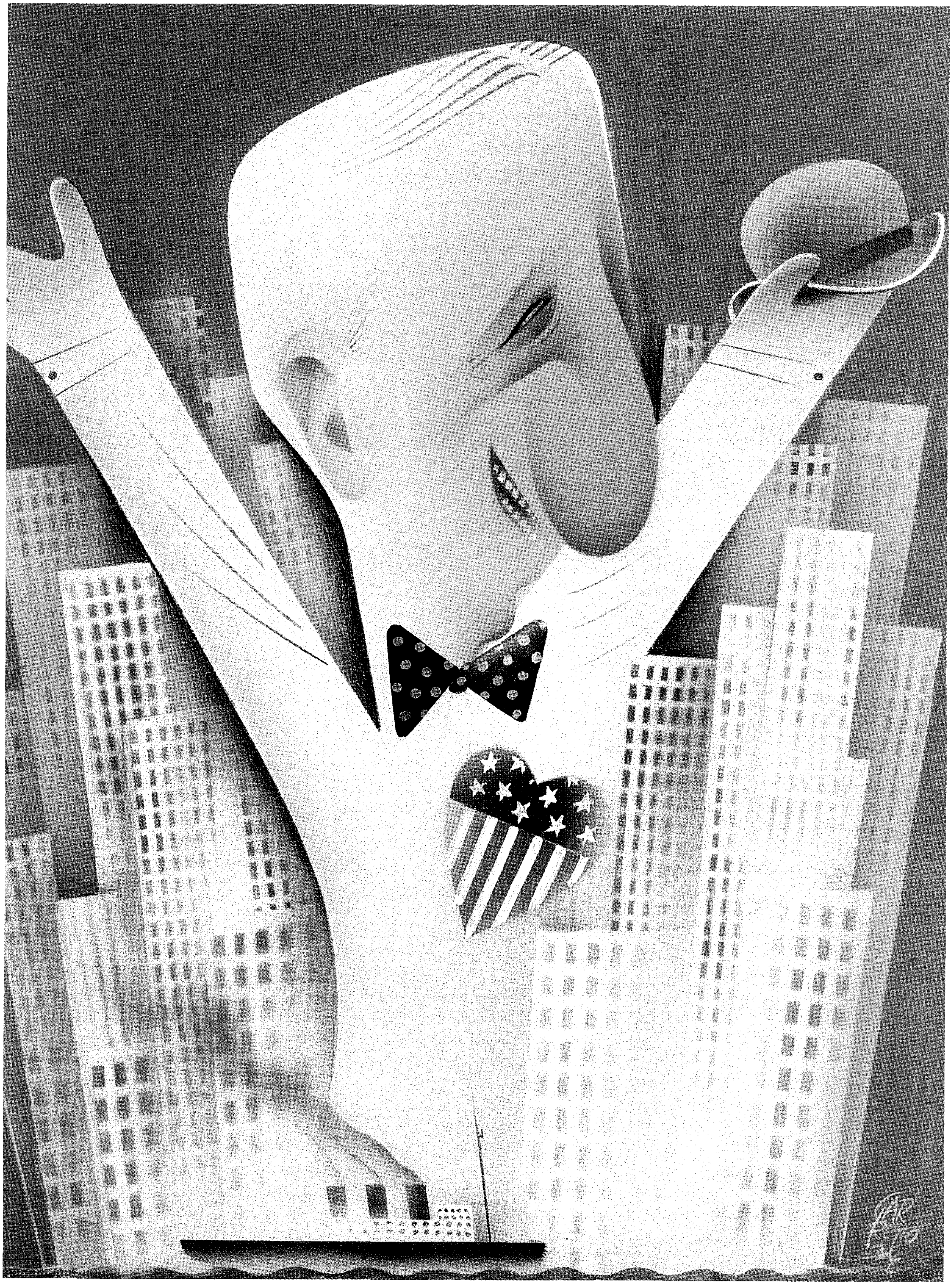
Kim Polese, who is the president and C.E.O. of Marimba, a Silicon Valley software company, also shrugs off the importance of gender. "In the software business, the product is driven by market need and by customer demand, and, when combined with proper execution in marketing and delivering a product, that is what creates a success," she says. "And that has nothing to do with being a woman. A movie has more subtlety to it. Software is zeros and ones."

"In music, I don't think the product will change," Sony's Michele Anthony says. "If you looked at my taste in music and if you didn't know who I was and you said, 'What is the gender of this person?' and if you heard the bands that I am often most closely associated with—Pearl Jam, Aerosmith, Rage Against the Machine, Alice in Chains, which are rock bands—you'd probably associate with a male. And, if anything, I think my influence on this company has probably been to generate more artists of that genre."

In the end, in the company of women, I was struck by the parallels between the management styles that women executives described as specific to their sex—nonhierarchical, team-oriented, willing to listen—and the newly minted wisdom of so many modern business gurus. These days, after all, savvy C.E.O.s talk softly about flexible networks, teams, and closeness to customers. And women undoubtedly recognize that the values of our time and place are affecting the American office. "To me, this is about how women are allowed to manage in their natural style and join forces with men," Geraldine Laybourne says. For a new generation of female executives, effective management isn't just doing what comes naturally; it may also be doing what they often do best. ♦

BOWERY BOY

Al Smith, the original Happy Warrior, may have been New York's greatest governor—no small distinction considering the competition, which includes John Jay, DeWitt Clinton, Martin Van Buren, Grover Cleveland, Charles E. Hughes, and the two Roosevelts. Born a century and a quarter ago this year, Smith was a dese-dem-doze product of the Lower East Side and Tammany Hall, who, during four gubernatorial terms in the decade after the First World War, made New York the laboratory for New Deal policy prototypes. In 1928, he became the first Roman Catholic (and the only flavorsome "ethnic") to win a major party's Presidential nomination. By 1934, though, F.D.R. had snatched the prize Smith felt should rightfully have been his; Paolo Garretto's portrait that year for the old Vanity Fair (right)—one of more than two hundred celebrity caricatures on view at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery through August 23rd—hints at the bitterness behind Smith's trademark ebullience.


GAR-RETTO '34

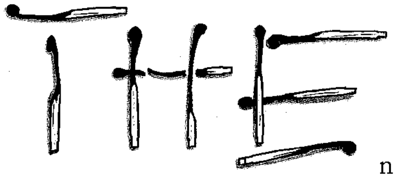
COURTESY CNP ARCHIVES

FICTION

A TEMPORARY MATTER

What happens when the lights go out.

BY JHUMPA LAHIRI



THE notice informed them that it was a temporary matter: for five days their electricity would be cut off for one hour, beginning at 8 P.M. A line had gone down in the last snowstorm, and the repairmen were going to take advantage of the milder evenings to set it right. The work would affect only the houses on their quiet tree-lined street, within walking distance of a row of brick-faced stores and a trolley stop, where Shoba and Shukumar had lived for three years.

"It's good of them to warn us," Shoba conceded after reading the notice aloud, more for her own benefit than for Shukumar's. She let the strap of her leather satchel, plump with files, slip from her shoulders, and left it in the hallway as she walked into the kitchen. She wore a navy-blue poplin raincoat over gray sweatpants and white sneakers, looking, at thirty-three, like the type of woman she'd once claimed she would never resemble.

She'd come from the gym. Her cranberry lipstick was visible only on the outer reaches of her mouth, and her eyeliner had left charcoal patches beneath her lashes. She used to look this way sometimes, Shukumar thought, on mornings after a party or a night at a bar, when she'd been too lazy to wash her face, too eager to collapse into his arms. She dropped a sheaf of mail on the table without a glance. Her eyes were still fixed on the notice in her other hand. "But they should do this sort of thing during the day."

"When I'm here, you mean," Shukumar said. He put a glass lid on a pot of lamb, adjusting it so only the slightest bit of steam could escape. Since January he'd been working at home, trying to complete the final chapters of his dissertation on agrarian revolts in India. "When do the repairs start?"

"It says March 19th. Is today the nineteenth?" Shoba went over to the framed corkboard that hung on the wall by the fridge, bare except for a calendar—a Christmas gift from a friend, even though Shoba and Shukumar hadn't celebrated Christmas last year.

"Today then," Shoba announced. "You have a dentist appointment next Friday, by the way."

Shukumar ran his tongue over the tops of his teeth; he'd forgotten to brush them that morning. He hadn't left the house all day. The more Shoba stayed out, and the more she began putting in extra hours at work and taking on additional projects, the more he wanted to stay in, not even leaving to get the mail, or to buy fruit or wine at the stores by the trolley stop.

Six months ago, in September, Shukumar was at an academic conference in Baltimore when Shoba went into labor, three weeks before her due date. He hadn't wanted to go to the conference, but she had insisted; it was important to make contacts, and he would be entering the job market next year. She told him that she had his number at the hotel, and a copy of his schedule and flight numbers, and she had arranged with her friend Gillian for a ride to the hospital in the event of an emergency. When the cab had pulled away that morning for the airport, Shoba stood waving goodbye in her robe, with one arm resting on the mound of her belly as if it were a perfectly natural part of her body.

Each time he thought of that moment, the last moment he saw Shoba pregnant, it was the cab he remembered most, a station wagon, painted red with blue lettering. It was cavernous compared with their own car. Although Shukumar was six feet tall, with hands too big ever to rest comfortably in the pockets of his jeans, he felt dwarfed in the back seat. As the cab sped down Beacon Street, he imagined a day when he and Shoba might need a station wagon of their own. He pictured himself gripping the wheel, as Shoba turned around to hand their children juice boxes. Once, these images of parenthood had troubled Shukumar, adding to his anxiety that he was still a student at thirty-five. But that early-autumn morning, the trees heavy with bronze leaves, he welcomed the image for the first time.

A member of the hotel staff had handed him a stiff square of stationery. It was only a telephone number, but Shukumar knew it was the hospital. When he got back to Boston it was over. The baby had been born dead. Shoba was lying on a bed, asleep, in a private room so small there was barely enough space to stand beside her, in a wing of the hospital they hadn't been to on the tour for expectant parents. Her placenta had weakened and she'd had a cesarean, though not quickly enough. The doctor explained that these things happen. He smiled in the kindest way it was possible to smile at people one knew only professionally. Shoba would be back on her feet in a few weeks. There was nothing to indicate that she would not be able to have children in the future.

SHUKUMAR gathered onion skins in his hands and let them drop into the garbage, on top of the ribbons of fat he'd trimmed from the lamb. He ran the water in the sink, soaking the knife and the cutting board, and rubbed a lemon half along his fingertips to get rid of the garlic smell, a trick he'd learned from Shoba. It was seven-thirty. Through the window he saw the sky, like soft black pitch. Uneven banks of snow still lined the sidewalks, though it was warm enough for people to walk about without hats or gloves. Nearly three feet had fallen in the last storm, and for a week people had to walk in single file, in narrow trenches. For a

FILIP PAGOWSKI

week, that was Shukumar's excuse for not leaving the house. But now the paths were widening, and water drained steadily into grates in the pavement.

"The lamb won't be done by eight," Shukumar said. "We may have to eat in the dark."

"We can light candles," Shoba said. She unclipped her hair, coiled neatly at her nape during the days, and pried the sneakers from her feet. "I'm going to shower before the lights go," she said, heading for the staircase. "I'll be down."

Shukumar moved her satchel and her sneakers to the side of the fridge. She wasn't this way before. She used to put her coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, and she paid bills as soon as they came. But now she treated the house as if it were a hotel. The fact that the yellow chintz armchair in the living room clashed with the blue-and-maroon Turkish carpet no longer bothered her. On the enclosed porch at the back of the house, a crisp white bag still sat on the wicker chaise, filled with lace she had once planned to turn into curtains.

With no lights, they would have to eat together. For months now they'd served themselves from the stove, and he'd take his plate into his study, letting the meal grow cold on his desk before shoving it into his mouth without pause, while Shoba took her plate to the living room and watched game shows, or proofread files with her arsenal of colored pencils at hand.

At some point in the evening she visited him. When he heard her approach he began typing sentences. She would rest her hands on his shoulders and stare with him into the blue glow of the computer screen. "Don't work too hard," she would say after a minute or two, and head off to bed. It was the one time in the day she sought him out, and yet he'd come to dread it. He knew it was something she forced herself to do. She would look around the walls of the room, which they had decorated together last summer with a border of marching ducks and rabbits playing trumpets and drums. By the end of August there was a cherry crib under the window, and a rocking chair with checkered cushions. Shukumar had disassembled it all before bringing Shoba back from the hospital, scraping off the rabbits and ducks with a spatula. For some reason the room did not haunt him the way it haunted Shoba. In January, when he stopped working at his carrel in the library, he set up his desk there deliberately, partly because the room soothed him, and partly because it was a place Shoba avoided.

IN the kitchen, Shukumar began to open drawers. He tried to find a candle among the scissors, the eggbeaters and whisks, the mortar and pestle she'd bought in a bazaar in Calcutta and had used to pound garlic cloves and cardamom pods, back when she used to cook. He found a flashlight, but no batteries, and a half-empty box of birthday candles. Shoba had thrown him a surprise birthday party last May. There had been a hundred and twenty people crammed into the house—all the friends and the friends of friends they now systematically avoided. Bottles of Vinho Verde had nested in a bed of ice in the bathtub. Shoba was in her fifth month, drinking ginger ale from a Martini glass. She had made a vanilla cream cake with custard and spun sugar. All night she kept Shukumar's long fingers linked with hers as they walked among the guests at the party.

Since September their only guest had been Shoba's mother. She came from Arizona and stayed with them for two months after Shoba returned from the hospital. She cooked dinner every night, drove herself to the supermarket, washed their clothes, put them away. She was a religious woman. She set up a small shrine, a framed picture of a lavender-faced goddess and a plate of marigold petals, on the bedside table in the guest room, and prayed twice a day for healthy grandchildren in the future. She was polite to Shukumar without being friendly. She folded his sweaters with an expertise she had learned from her job in a department store. She replaced a missing button on his winter coat and knit him a beige and brown scarf, presenting it to him without the least bit of ceremony, as if he had only dropped it and hadn't noticed. She never talked to him about Shoba; once, when he mentioned the baby's death, she looked up from her knitting and said, "But you weren't even there."

He looked for something to put the birthday candles in and settled on the soil of a potted ivy that normally sat on the windowsill over the sink. Even though the plant was inches from the tap, the soil was so dry that he had to water it first before the candles would stand straight. He pushed aside the things on the kitchen table, the piles of mail, the unread library books. He remembered their first meals there, when they were so thrilled to be married, to be living together at last, that they would just reach for each other foolishly, more eager to make love than to eat. He put down two embroidered placemats, a wedding gift from an uncle in Lucknow, and set out the plates and wineglasses they usually saved for guests. He put the ivy in the middle, the white-edged, star-shaped leaves girded by ten little candles. He tuned the radio to a jazz station.

"What's all this?" Shoba asked when she came downstairs. Her hair was wrapped in a thick white towel. She undid the towel and draped it over a chair, allowing her hair, damp and dark, to fall across her back. As she walked absently toward the stove she took out a few tangles with her fingers. She wore a clean pair of sweatpants, a T-shirt, an old flannel robe. Her stomach was flat again, her waist narrow before the flare of her hips, the belt of the robe tied in a floppy knot.

It was nearly eight. Shukumar put some lentils from the night before into the microwave oven, punching the numbers on the timer.

"You made rogan josh," Shoba observed, looking through the glass lid at the bright paprika stew.

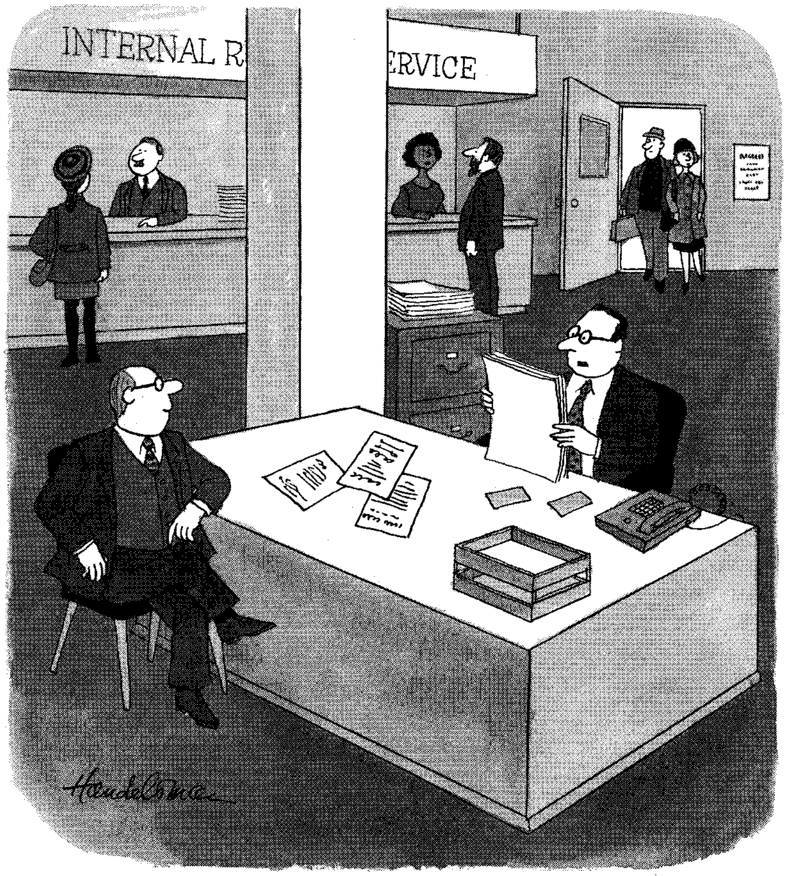
Shukumar took out a piece of lamb, pinching it quickly between his fingers so as not to scald himself. He prodded a larger piece with a serving spoon to make sure the meat slipped easily from the bone. "It's ready," he announced.

Once she had done all the cooking. Now he combed through her cookbooks every afternoon, following her pencilled-in instructions to use two teaspoons of ground coriander seeds instead of one, or red lentils instead of yellow. Each of the recipes was dated, telling when they had first eaten the dish together. April 2nd, cauliflower with fennel. January 14th, chicken with almonds and sultanas. He had no memory of eating those meals, and yet there they were, recorded in her neat proofreader's hand. Shukumar enjoyed cooking now. It was the one thing that made him productive. If it weren't for him, he knew, Shoba would eat a bowl of cereal for her dinner.

The microwave had just beeped when the lights went out, and the music disappeared.

"Perfect timing," Shoba said.

"All I could find were birthday can-



"It's not enough to write 'Megabucks' on your return, Mr. Clacton. You're supposed to tell us how many."

dles." He lit up the ivy, keeping the rest of the candles and a book of matches by his plate.

"It doesn't matter," she said, running a finger along the stem of her wineglass. "It looks lovely."

In the dimness, he knew how she sat, a bit forward in her chair, ankles crossed against the lowest rung, left elbow on the table. During his search for the candles, Shukumar had found a bottle of wine in a crate he had thought was empty. Every few minutes he lit a few more birthday candles and drove them into the soil of the pot.

"It's like India," Shoba said. "Sometimes the current disappears for hours at a stretch. I once had to attend an entire rice ceremony in the dark. The baby just cried and cried. It must have been so hot."

Their baby would never have a rice ceremony, Shukumar considered. Shoba had made the guest list, and decided on which of her three brothers she was going to ask to feed the child its first taste of solid food, at six months if it was a boy, seven if it was a girl.

"Are you hot?" he asked her. He pushed the blazing ivy pot to the other end of the table, making it even more difficult for them to see each other. He was suddenly irritated that he couldn't go upstairs and sit in front of the computer.

"No. It's delicious," she said, tapping her plate with her fork. "It really is."

He refilled the wine in her glass. She thanked him.

They weren't like this before. Now he had to struggle to say something that interested her, something that made her look up from her plate, or from her proofreading files. Eventually he had given up trying to amuse her. He learned not to mind the silences.

"I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something," Shoba continued. He could barely see her face, but from her tone he knew her eyes were narrowed, as if trying to focus on a distant object. It was a habit of hers.

"Like what?"

"I don't know. A little poem. A joke. A fact about the world. For some reason my relatives always wanted me to tell them the names of my friends in America. I don't know why the information was so interesting to them. The last time I saw my aunt, she asked after four girls I went to elementary school with in Tucson. I barely remember them now."

Shukumar hadn't spent as much time in India as Shoba had. His parents, who settled in New Hampshire, used to go back without him. The first time he'd gone as an infant he'd nearly died of amebic dysentery. His father, a nervous type, was afraid to take him again, in case something were to happen, and left him with his aunt and uncle in Concord. As a teen-ager he preferred sailing camp or scooping ice cream during the summers rather than going to Calcutta. It wasn't until after his father died, in his last year of college, that the country began to interest him, and he studied its history from course books as if it were any other subject. He wished now that he had his own childhood story of India.

"Let's do that," she said suddenly.

"Do what?"

"Say something to each other in the dark."

"Like what? I don't know any jokes."

"No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before."

"I used to play this game in high school," Shukumar recalled. "When I got drunk."

"You're thinking of Truth or Dare. This is different. O.K., I'll start." She took a sip of wine. "The first time I was alone in your apartment, I looked in your address book to see if you'd written me in. I think we'd known each other two weeks."

"Where was I?"

"You went to answer the telephone in the other room. It was your mother, and I figured it would be a long call. I wanted to know if you'd promoted me from the margins of your newspaper."

"Had I?"

"No. But I didn't give up on you. Now it's your turn."

He couldn't think of anything, but Shoba was waiting for him to speak. She hadn't appeared so determined in months. He thought back to their first meeting, four years earlier at a lecture hall in Cambridge, where a group of Bengali poets were giving a recital. They'd ended up side by side, on folding wooden chairs. Shukumar was soon bored; he was unable to decipher the literary diction, and couldn't join the rest of the audience as they sighed and nodded solemnly after certain phrases. Peering at the newspaper folded in his lap, he studied the temperatures of cities around the world. Ninety-one degrees in Singapore yesterday, fifty-one in Stockholm. When he turned his head to the left, he saw a woman next to him making a grocery list on the back of a folder, and was startled to find that she was beautiful.

"O.K.," he said, remembering. "The first time we went out to dinner, to the Portuguese place, I forgot to tip the waiter. I went back the next morning, found out his name, left money with the manager."

"You went all the way back to Somerville just to tip a waiter?"

"I took a cab."

"Why did you forget to tip the waiter?"

The birthday candles had run out, but he pictured her face clearly in the dark, the wide tilting eyes, the full grape-toned lips, the fall at age two from her high chair still visible as a comma on her chin. Each day, Shukumar noticed, her beauty, which had once overwhelmed him, seemed to fade. The cosmetics that had seemed superfluous were necessary now—not to improve her but to define her somehow.

"By the end of the meal I had a funny feeling that I might marry you," he said, admitting it to himself as well as to her for the first time. "It must have distracted me."

THE next night Shoba came home earlier than usual. There was lamb left over from the evening before, and Shukumar heated it up so that they were able to eat by seven. He'd gone out that day, through the melting snow, and bought a packet of taper candles from the corner store, and batteries to fit the flashlight. He had the candles ready on the countertop, standing in brass holders shaped like lotuses, but they ate under the glow of a copper-shaded ceiling lamp that hung over the table.

When they had finished eating, Shukumar was surprised to see that Shoba was stacking her plate on top of his, and then carrying them toward the sink. He had assumed that she would retreat to the living room, behind her barricade of files.

"Don't worry about the dishes," he said, taking them from her hands.

"It seems silly not to," she replied, pouring a drop of detergent onto a sponge. "It's nearly eight o'clock."

His heart quickened. All day Shukumar had looked forward to the lights going out. He thought about what Shoba had said the night before, about looking in his address book. It felt good to remember her as she was then, how bold yet nervous she'd been when they first met, how hopeful. They stood side by side at the sink, their reflections fitting together in the frame of the window. It made him shy, the way he felt the first time they stood before a mirror. He couldn't recall the last time they'd been photographed. They had stopped attending parties, went nowhere together. The film in his camera still contained pictures of Shoba, in the yard, when she was pregnant.

After finishing the dishes, they leaned against the counter, drying their hands on either end of a towel. At eight o'clock the house went black. Shukumar lit the wicks of the candles, impressed by their long, steady flames. "Let's sit outside," Shoba said. "I think it's warm still."

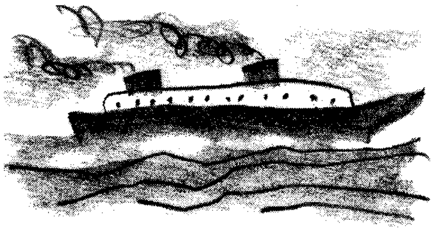
They each took a candle and sat down on the steps. It seemed strange to be sitting outside with patches of snow still on the ground. But everyone was out of their houses tonight, the air fresh enough to make people restless. Screen doors opened and closed. A small parade of neighbors passed by with flashlights.

"We're going to the bookstore to browse," a silver-haired man called out. He was walking with his wife, a thin woman in a windbreaker, and holding a dog on a leash. They were the Bradfords, and they had tucked a sympathy card into Shoba and Shukumar's mailbox back in September. "I hear they've got their power."

"They'd better," Shukumar said. "Or you'll be browsing in the dark."

The woman laughed, slipping her arm through the crook of her husband's elbow. "Want to join us?"

"No thanks," Shoba and Shukumar called out together. It surprised Shukumar that his words matched hers.



He wondered what Shoba would tell him in the dark. The worst possibilities had already run through his head. That she'd had an affair. That she didn't respect him for being thirty-five and still a student. That she blamed him for being in Baltimore, the way her mother did. But he knew those things weren't true. She'd been faithful, as had he. She believed in him. It was she who had insisted he go to Baltimore. What didn't they know about each other? He knew she curled her fingers tightly when she slept, that her body twitched during bad dreams. He knew she favored honeydew over cantaloupe. He knew that when they returned from the hospital the first thing she did as she walked into the house was to pick out objects of theirs and toss them into a pile in the hallway: books from the shelves, plants from windowsills, paintings from walls, photos from tables, pots and pans that hung from the hooks over the stove. Shukumar had stepped out of her way, watching as she moved methodically from room to room. When she was satisfied, she stood staring at the pile she'd made, her lips drawn back in such distaste that Shukumar had thought she would spit. Then she'd started to cry.

He began to feel cold as he sat there on the steps. He felt that he needed her to talk first, in order to reciprocate.

"That time when your mother came to visit us," she said finally. "When I said one night that I had to stay late at work, I went out with Gillian and had a Martini."

He looked at her profile, the slender nose, the slightly masculine set of her jaw. He remembered that night well; eating with his mother, tired from teaching two classes back to back, wishing Shoba were there to say more of the right things, because he could come up only with wrong ones. It had been twelve years since his father had died, and his mother had come to spend two weeks with him and Shoba, to honor his memory together. Each night his mother cooked something his father had liked, but she was too upset to eat the dishes herself, and her eyes would well up as Shoba stroked her hand. "It's so touching," Shoba had said to him at the time. Now he saw Shoba with Gillian, in the bar with striped velvet sofas, the one they used to go to after the movies, making sure she got her extra olive, asking

Gillian for a cigarette. He imagined her complaining, and Gillian sympathizing about visits from in-laws. It was Gillian who had driven Shoba to the hospital.

"Your turn," she said, stopping his thoughts.

At the end of their street Shukumar heard sounds of a drill and the electricians shouting over it. He looked at the darkened façades of the houses lining the street. Candles glowed in the windows of one. Smoke rose from a chimney.

"I cheated on my Oriental Civilization exam in college," he said. "It was my last semester, my last set of exams. My father had died a few months before. I could see the blue book of the guy next to me. He was an American guy, a maniac. He knew Urdu and Sanskrit. I couldn't remember if the verse we had to identify was an example of a *ghazal* or not. I looked at his answer and copied it down."

It had happened over fifteen years ago. He felt a relief now, having told her.

She turned to him, looking not at his face but at his shoes—old moccasins he wore as if they were slippers, the leather at the back permanently flattened. She took his hand and pressed it. "You didn't have to tell me why you did it," she said, moving closer to him.

They sat together until nine o'clock, when the lights came on. They heard some people across the street clapping from their porch, and televisions being turned on. The Bradfords walked back down the street, eating ice-cream cones, and waving. Shoba and Shukumar waved back. Then they stood up, his hand still in hers, and went inside.

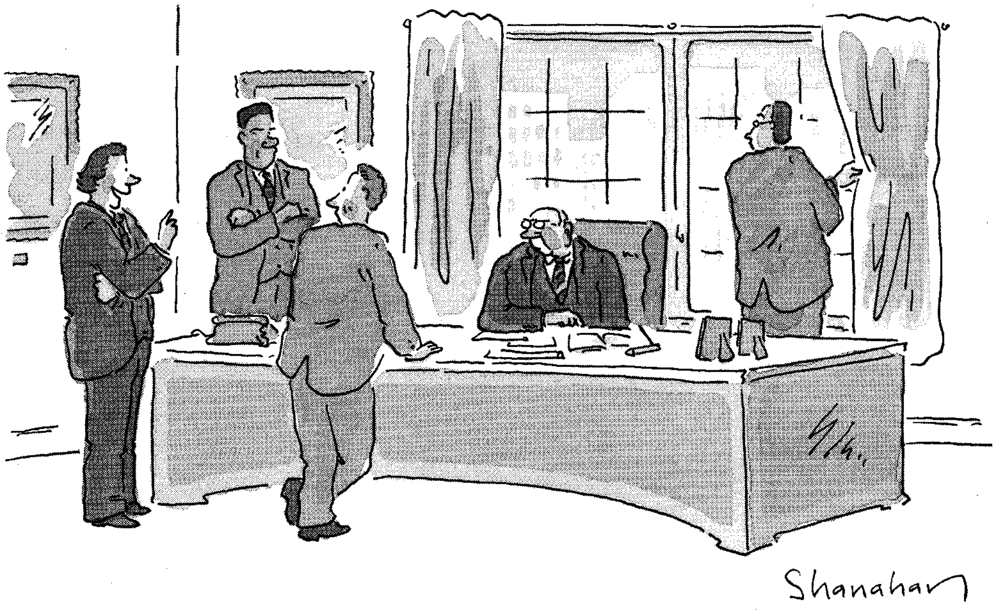
SOMEHOW, without either of them saying anything, it had turned into this. Into an exchange of confessions—the little ways they'd hurt or disappointed each other, and themselves. The following day Shukumar thought for hours about what to say to her. He was torn between admitting that he had once ripped out a photo of a woman in one of the fashion magazines she used to subscribe to and carried it in his books for a week, or saying that he really hadn't lost the sweater-vest she bought him for their third wedding anniversary but had exchanged it at Filene's, and that he had got drunk alone in the middle of the day at a hotel bar. For their previous anniversary, Shoba had cooked a ten-course dinner just for him. This gift depressed him. "My wife gave me a sweater-vest for our anniversary," he complained to the bartender, his head heavy with cognac. "What do you expect?" the bartender had replied. "You're married."

As for the picture of the woman, he didn't know why he'd ripped it out. She wasn't as pretty as Shoba. She wore a white sequinned dress, and had a sullen face, and lean, mannish legs. Shoba had been pregnant at the time, her stomach suddenly immense, to the point where Shukumar no longer wanted to touch her. The first time he saw the picture he was lying in bed next to her, watching her as she read. When he noticed the magazine in the recycling pile he found the woman and tore out the page as carefully as he could. For about a week he allowed himself a glimpse each day. He felt an intense desire for the woman, but it was a desire that turned to disgust after a minute or two. It was the closest he'd come to infidelity.

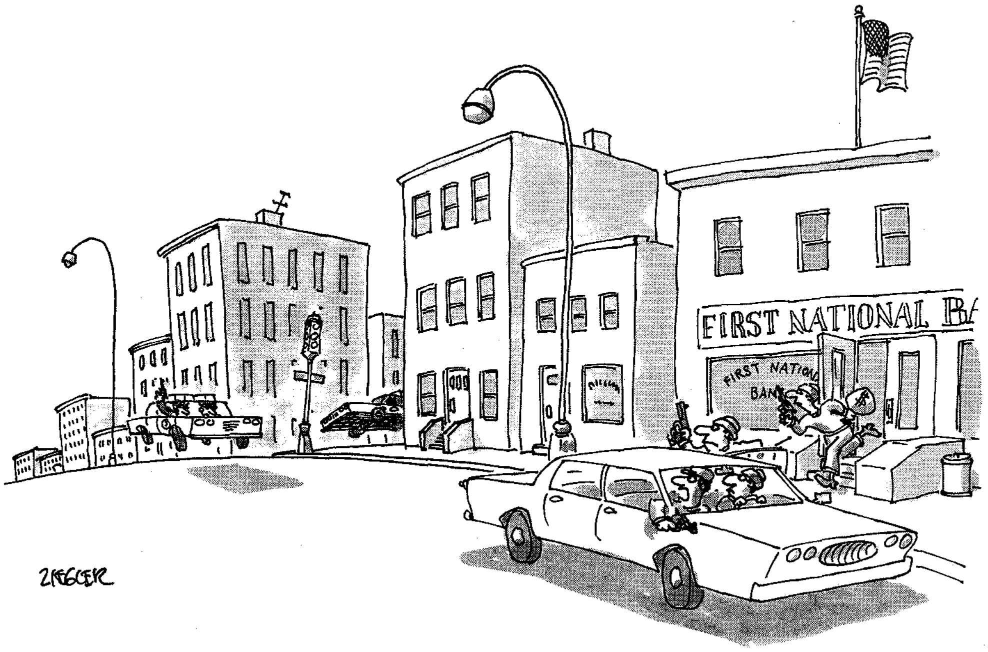
He told Shoba about the sweater on the third night, the picture on the fourth. She said nothing as he spoke. She simply listened, and then she took his hand, pressing it as she had before. On the third night, she told him that once, after a lecture they'd attended, she let him speak to the chairman of his department even though there was a dab of pâté on his chin. She'd been irritated with him, and so she'd let him go on and on, about securing his fellowship for the following semester, without putting a finger to her own chin as a signal. The fourth night, she said that she never liked the one poem he'd ever published, in a literary magazine in Utah. He'd written the poem after meeting Shoba. She added that she found the poem sentimental.

Something happened when the house was dark. They were able to talk to each other again. The third night after supper they'd sat together on the sofa, and once it was dark he began kissing her awkwardly on her forehead and her face. The fourth night they walked carefully upstairs, to bed, feeling together for the final step with their feet before the landing, and making love with a desperation they had forgotten. She wept without sound, and whispered his name, and traced his eyebrows with her finger in the dark. As he made love to her he wondered what he would say to her the next night, and what she would say, the thought of it exciting him. "Hold me," he said. "Hold me in your arms." By the time the lights came back on downstairs, they'd fallen asleep.

THE morning of the fifth night Shukumar found another notice from the electric company in the mailbox. The line had been repaired ahead of schedule, it said. He was disappointed. He had planned on making shrimp malai for Shoba, but when he arrived at the store he didn't feel like cooking anymore. It wasn't the same, he thought, knowing that the lights wouldn't go out. In the store the shrimp looked gray and thin. The coconut-milk



"I know what Ally McBeal would do."



"Oh, great! Here comes the obligatory car chase."

tin was dusty and overpriced. Still, he bought them, along with a beeswax candle and two bottles of wine.

She came home at seven-thirty. "I suppose this is the end of our game," he said when he saw her reading the notice.

She looked at him. "You can still light candles if you want." She hadn't been to the gym tonight. She wore a suit beneath her raincoat. Her makeup had been retouched.

When she went upstairs to change, Shukumar poured himself some wine and put on a Thelonious Monk record that she liked.

When she came downstairs they ate together. She didn't thank him or compliment him. They simply ate in a darkened room, in the glow of a beeswax candle. They had survived a difficult time. They finished off the shrimp. They finished off the first bottle of wine and moved on to the second. They sat together until the candle had nearly burned away. She shifted in her chair, and Shukumar thought that she was about to say something. But instead she blew out the candle, stood up, turned on the light switch, and sat down again.

"Shouldn't we keep the lights off?" Shukumar asked.

She set her plate aside and clasped her hands on the table. "I want you to see my face when I tell you this," she said gently.

His heart began to pound. The day she told him she was pregnant, she had used the very same words, saying them in the same gentle way, turning off the basketball game he'd been watching on television. He hadn't been prepared then. Now he was.

Only he didn't want her to be pregnant again. He didn't want to have to pretend to be happy.

"I've been looking for an apartment and I've found one," she said, narrowing her eyes on something, it seemed, behind his left shoulder. It was nobody's fault, she continued. They'd been through enough. She needed some time alone. She had money saved up for a security deposit. The apartment was on Beacon Hill, so she could walk to work. She had signed the lease that night before coming home.

She wouldn't look at him, but he stared at her. It was obvious that she'd rehearsed the lines. All this time she'd been looking for an apartment, testing the water pressure, asking a Realtor if heat and hot water were included in the rent. It shocked Shukumar, knowing that she had spent these past days preparing for a life without him. He was relieved and yet he was sickened. This was what she'd been trying to tell him for the past four evenings. This was the point of her game.

Now it was his turn to speak. There was something he'd sworn he would never tell her, and for six months he had done his best to block it from his mind. Before the ultrasound she had asked the doctor not to tell her the sex of their child, and Shukumar had agreed. She had wanted it to be a surprise.

Later, those few times they talked about what had happened, she said at least they'd been spared that knowledge. In a way she almost took pride in her decision, for it enabled her to seek refuge in a mystery. He knew that she assumed it was a mystery for him, too. He'd arrived too late from Baltimore—when it was all over and she was lying on the hospital bed. But he hadn't. He'd arrived early enough to see their baby, and to hold him before they cremated him. At first he had recoiled at the suggestion, but the doctor said holding the baby might help him with the process of grieving. Shoba was asleep. The baby had been cleaned off, his bulbous lids shut tight to the world.

"Our baby was a boy," he said. "His skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds. His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night."

Shoba looked at him now, her face contorted with sorrow. He had cheated on a college exam, ripped a picture of a woman out of a magazine. He had returned a sweater and got drunk in the middle of the day instead. These were the things he had told her. He had held his son, who had known life only within her, against his chest in a darkened room in an unknown wing of the hospital. He had held him until a nurse knocked and took him away, and he had promised himself that day that he would never tell Shoba, because he still loved her then, and it was the one thing in her life that she had wanted to be a surprise.

Shukumar stood up and stacked his plate on top of hers. He carried the plates to the sink, but instead of running the tap he looked out the window. Outside, the evening was still warm, and the Bradfords were walking arm in arm. As he watched the couple, the room went dark, and he spun around. Shoba had turned the lights off. She came back to the table and sat down, and after a moment Shukumar joined her. They wept together, for the first time in their lives, for the things they now knew. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE MAESTRO OF MIDNIGHT

The Kirov Opera's Valery Gergiev descends again on New York.

BY ALEX ROSS

THREE months ago, on a chartered Aeroflot flight from Russia to Israel, Valery Gergiev fell asleep. For an hour, he did nothing but doze. He did not answer queries from his colleagues at the Maryinsky Theatre of Opera and Ballet, in St. Petersburg, of which he is the director. He did not field cellular calls from places where he would be conducting over the next six months—London, New York, Rotterdam, Milan, Lisbon, Tel Aviv, Istanbul, and about twenty other cities. He did not answer nosy journalistic questions about rumors that he is going to take over one or more major American orchestras and opera houses. He did not gossip with friends in the orchestra or discuss with a delegation of brass players the possibility of using a bass trombone in a passage of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony. No, Gergiev slept—or so it seemed. I was sitting next to him, and I cannot say for sure that his mind was completely disengaged. His foot wagged to some irregular Stravinskyan rhythm. For all I know, he was rehearsing "The Rite of Spring" in his head.

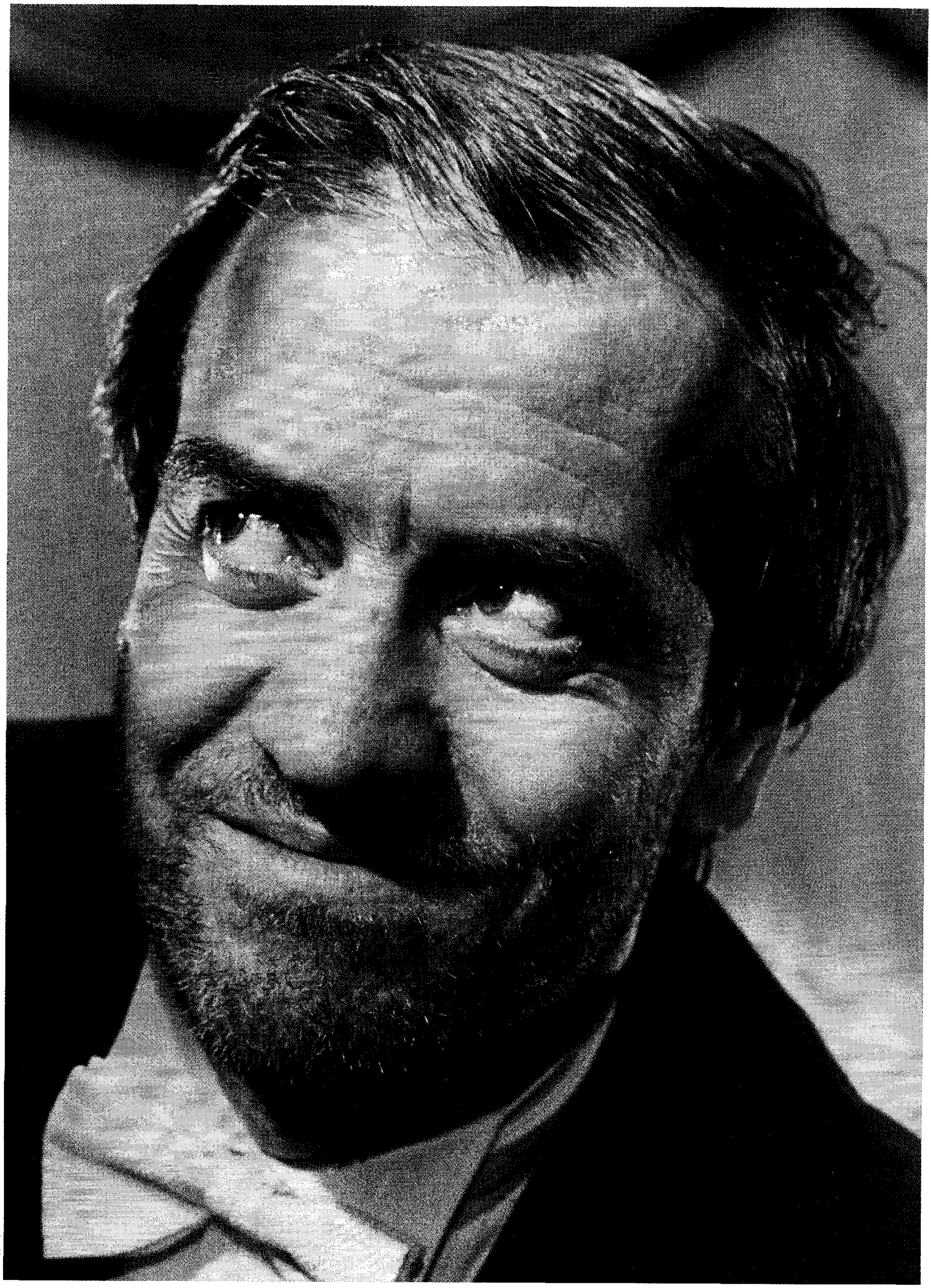
He had reason to be tired. Eight hours earlier, at midnight, he had been on the podium of the Maryinsky, presiding over the soft apocalypse of Wagner's "Parsifal." He had then worked in his office until 5 A.M.—he would be away from St. Petersburg for two months and had piles of paperwork to contend with—and by the time he got on the plane his eyes were glassy, his face ashen. Before falling asleep, he tried to read the autobiography of the late conductor Georg Solti. Inside the cover, a friend had written the inscription "May your life be as long and as rich as Sir Georg's." Under the circumstances, it looked like a warning. Those who are close to Gergiev worry constantly about his health. They know that his father died of a stroke at the age of forty-nine; Gergiev turns forty-five next month. He encourages these worries by finishing discussions of future projects with the clause "if I am alive."

This man carries a disproportionate share of the music world on his shoulders. He is something of a national hero in Russia for having kept alive the Maryinsky Theatre after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under his leadership, the Maryinsky, which is known in the West by its Soviet name, the Kirov, has become one of the most celebrated—and recorded—opera companies in the world. He takes the Kirov on arduous tours and next week will bring it to the Metropolitan Opera for a festival of Russian opera. Last September, the Met appointed Gergiev its principal guest conductor, and the New York Philharmonic has made him a regular presence. But at the moment, slumped in his Aeroflot seat, the architect of all this excitement looked, as the Russians say, like a catastrophe.

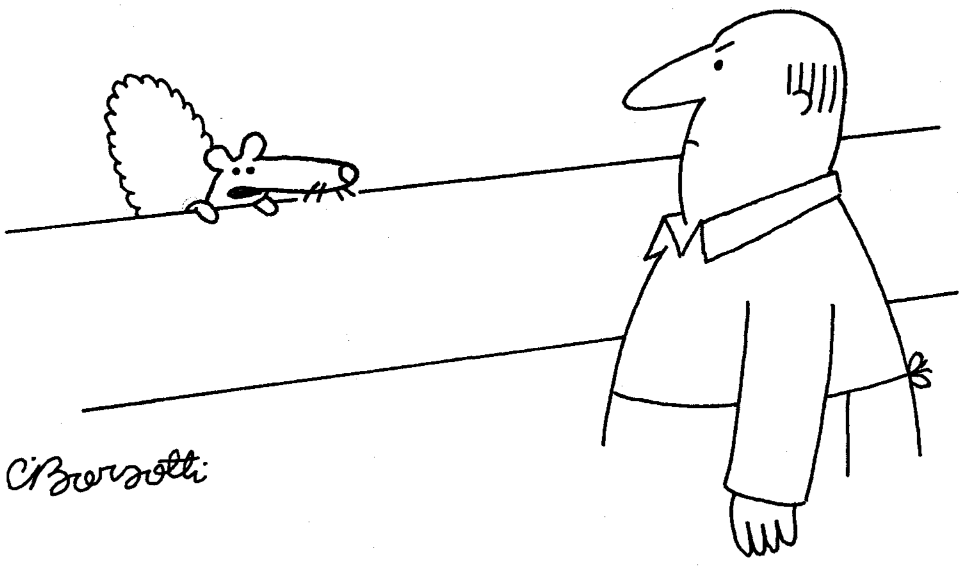
The hour of sleep refreshed him, however. Gergiev woke up and resumed an articulate, rambling monologue. "We did quite a good 'Parsifal,' don't you think?" he said to me, patting down his thinning jet-black hair and massaging the sides of his mouth. "Not bad, considering we had maybe a half hour of rehearsal. The brass, maybe, they are a little tired. But, I would say . . ." He looked out the window. "So! Israel! We are landing. Is bumpy. *Molto agitato.*" His jacket thrown over a shoulder, he emerged from the plane into the Israeli sun. A TV crew was waiting for him, and he quickly regained his maestro-like bearing. One can learn much from Gergiev about the relationship of posture to power: he is not a tall man, but he always appears to be looking down. He expands his chest and hunches his shoulders and tilts up the back of his head while leaning it to one side. With his Jack Nicholson eyebrows and several days' growth of beard, he can put on a fearsome face when fearsomeness is required. At the airport, Israeli officials wasted his time with silly questions. "Did anyone give you any packages?" he was asked. He tilted his head, stared down, took a long pause, and answered, in a forceful legato, "No." The inspector's shoulders sagged. Gergiev bounded into a waiting car.

THE first thing to be said about Gergiev is that he has incredible stamina. The Kirov orchestra, chorus, and soloists, having finished "Parsifal" at midnight and flown to Israel in the morning, took buses from the desert airport to the southern resort of Eilat and performed Tchaikovsky's opera "Mazeppa" that night. Still, Gergiev managed to achieve in that performance the same balance of beauty and power that he usually obtains from his company. Even with his musicians in a daze, he built up Tchaikovsky's layers of frenzy and despair. Superficially, the noise matched what is thought to be a characteristic mode of Russian music-making: the over-the-barricades manner of, say, Vladimir Horowitz. But Gergiev touched, as he often does, on something deeper. He created a unifying aura, a raptness of mood. Other conductors of his generation have made their names with self-consciously individual interpretations; Gergiev produces a spontaneous rush of emotion, a communal celebration of sound.

I was with Gergiev, off and on, for a month and a half, and this trip to Israel was the most impressive feat I witnessed. It was a demonstration of what has made him perhaps the most charismatic conductor of his generation. At a time when maestros seem mass-produced, he stands out as an old-fashioned, larger-than-life character, like the conductors in black-and-white newsreels and on scratchy old records. He has great charm and also a ferocity that makes people jump. He is an immensely skilled heir to a great



Gergiev is like the village devil in a Gogol tale who leaves perplexity and mayhem in his wake. Photograph by Arnold Newman.



"Come on. If you sell beer, you must sell peanuts."

Russian musical tradition: he cherishes what he loves in that tradition while killing its clichés. He comes from another place—geographically, culturally, psychologically. But what place is it? Gergiev is a man both of the world and out of it.

The trouble is that his Flying Dutchman life style comes naturally to very few others. His bad habits—running late, improvising solutions at the last minute, scheduling himself in several places in quick succession and not always getting to the airport on time—put psychological strain on colleagues in the West. ("It's not 'Waiting for Godot,' " one administrator says. "It's 'Waiting for Gergiev.' ") The Kirov itself is sometimes bent almost to the breaking point. Gergiev has saved it from the mediocrity into which the Bolshoi Theatre, in Moscow, has lately fallen, but the price has been a not quite healthy dependence on the magic of his personality. When Gergiev is gone, observers say, the quality of the Kirov's performances slips precipitately. Has he built a better opera house in Petersburg, or has he fashioned a hall of mirrors for his own mesmeric powers? So far, it seems that he has created a hybrid—something between the world's greatest opera house and a fly-by-night operation. In the end, there may be no contradiction.

Gergiev does entertain ideas of slowing down. In Israel, he discussed notions of fun with the celebrated violist Yuri Bashmet, one of his closest friends. Bashmet, who is also an intense musician but a more carefree soul, had recently gone scuba diving. "You put on tanks, breathing apparatus, you go under water," he explained.

"And?" Gergiev asked.

"You look around."

"What are you looking for?"

"Nothing. Just looking."

"Hmm, for pleasure, I see," Gergiev said, stroking his mouth, sounding unconvinced. He did take an hour-long pleasure cruise around the Gulf of Aqaba, but what really delighted him was the grand view from the balcony of his hotel: Jordan was a mile to the east, Egypt was visible across the gulf, and Saudi Arabia was farther to the southeast. There was an outdoor Jacuzzi—perhaps the only Jacuzzi in the world from which you could see Mount Sinai, if anyone knew where Mount Sinai was. But the Jacuzzi gave no sign of having been used. After admiring the view for a moment, Gergiev studied a fax in which the Metropolitan Opera briefed him on plans for the year 2001.

The Maryinsky Theatre is a big pale-green building surrounded by broad boulevards and a canal. Inside, it feels like the opera house that time forgot. Narrow staircases, worn down like the steps of a medieval castle, undulate beneath one's feet: for more than a century, choruses have thundered down them toward the curtain. There's a pungent smell of old wood. Some passages lead nowhere and are stacked with scenery that looks as though it dated back to the time of the legendary bass Chaliapin. One day, I went into the office of Dennis Kalashnikov, a quick, elfin man who, among other things, arranges logistics for the company's tours. I asked him who was going to sing in "Parsifal," and he went to his computer to print out the cast list. As I was on the point of being impressed by his efficiency, the room was plunged into total darkness; the addition of the printer to the system had evidently blown a fuse. "Welcome to the Kirov," Kalashnikov said merrily.

Gergiev is, in one sense, an insider, an heir to the Maryinsky tradition. In another sense, he is an outsider, a pretender. His strongest link to the past was made at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory, which is housed across the street from the theatre. Gergiev studied there in the early seventies, and his teacher was an amazing man named Ilya Musin, who has taught each of the last three directors of the Kirov and who still teaches five days a week at the age of ninety-four. Through him, Gergiev can almost touch the world before the Revolution: Musin was taught by the conductor Nikolai Malko, and Malko was taught by Rimsky himself. When Gergiev conducts Shostakovich, he can bear in mind that his teacher first met Shostakovich in the student cafeteria.

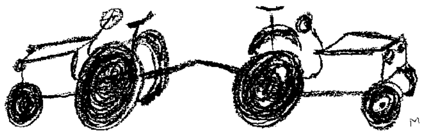
Yet Gergiev is not a native Petersburger. He is not even, strictly speaking, Russian. He was born in Moscow but grew up in Ossetia, a small republic in the Caucasus Mountains, deep in the south of the Russian Federation. His father, an Army officer, came from Ossetia and retired there after serving heroically in the Great Patriotic War. Ossetians are a people of nomadic origins: they are descended from the Scythians, the marauders who swept across much of Russia and the Middle East in the first millennium B.C. Their dialect is related to the Iranian language group. Along with the other fifty-odd ethnic groups of the Caucasus, the Ossetians are considered outsiders: Russians habitually denigrate them as dirty, backward, and criminal.

It therefore caused some uneasiness when an Ossetian took over the glorious opera-and-ballet theatre of the tsar. According to the music critic John Ardoin, who is writing a book about the Maryinsky, “A lot of people in the theatre simply do not like him because he’s not Russian.” Even the friendliest of Gergiev’s co-workers tend to throw up their hands when confronted by a physiognomy and psychology different from their own. “Only an Eastern man could work like this,” the stage director Georgy Isaakian told me as he tried to sort out plans for the upcoming production of “Prince Igor” at the Met. “Westerners—we like to have a plan for life, some comforts, a sense of being settled. He is like a conqueror on the move.” Gergiev does not try to overcome this idea of ethnic difference; indeed, he manipulates it. He sometimes suggests that there is a kind of tribal, ritual aspect to his performances. “In my ‘Rite of Spring,’ ” he said at a New York Philharmonic rehearsal, “you can smell the blood.” These two inheritances from the past—the refined Petersburg phantasmagoria and the mountain culture of Ossetia—seem to correspond to the contrasting points of Gergiev’s artistic personality.

GERGIEV’S chief memory of Ossetia is of an ordinary provincial childhood on which music steadily intruded. “I never wanted to be a musician,” he told me once, over lunch. “It wasn’t a decision I made myself. I was playing soccer from the age of six or seven. All I was interested in was in joining the other kids. Even if there was only a ball like this”—he picked up a round loaf of bread—“we’d play anyway, in some tiny courtyard.” He was pushed in the direction of music by his mother, a formidable woman with whom Gergiev remains extremely close. And something about the sound he made at the piano fascinated the first musicians who heard him. (The pianist Alexander Toradze, who is one of Gergiev’s closest friends, says, “He has an incredible sustained tone, an orchestral sound.”) Gergiev entered the St. Petersburg conservatory as both a pianist and a conductor, but was soon told to concentrate on conducting. He gained early international exposure by winning second prize in the Karajan Conducting Competition in 1977. Karajan asked him to be his assistant in Berlin, but the offer got lost in the thickets of the Soviet bureaucracy. Gergiev is thankful that he was instead put to work as a staff conductor at the Kirov: “It was good for me—a time when I just worked very hard and found who I was as a conductor. Later, at a good time, I had all the international exposure.”

You can still see in Gergiev a bit of the schoolyard ringleader, the charming bully whom everyone wants to please. But that familiar type has been absorbed completely into the musical realm. Everything in Gergiev’s world is filtered through music. His ears perk up, like a cat’s, at any faintly musical sound. On a walk down Broadway in December, I watched him become distracted by a young homeless man who was irregularly banging on a xylophone. In a split second Gergiev analyzed the performance to be certain that he had not overlooked the xylophonist of tomorrow. His closest friends—Toradze, Bashmet, several favorite singers in the Kirov ensemble—are those who mean the most to him musically. He relates to them not just as people but as producers of sound. “I always compare Bashmet to Olga Borodina”—the Kirov’s leading mezzo-soprano—“who is maybe the most compelling vocal instrument of our time,” he told me. “They are like a brother and sister from the same blood group. It is also the way I want to make the orchestra sound: something to do with this dark, round, deep—brilliant, if needed; biting, if needed; even explosive—but basically this wonderful alto or contralto sound, especially from the celli and contrabasses and tuba and timpani. It can be huge, it can be heavy, it can be just lyrical. I do not get it just by beating time.”

So how does he get it? Most conductors can hold a score in their head. Many can reproduce an orchestral score on the piano. Some, like Gergiev, have a kind of photographic memory, which enables them to recall scores they looked at years ago. Gergiev’s talent is rarer: he can form an idea of the music’s emotional texture and bring it viscerally to life. Esa-Pekka Salonen, a fellow-conductor who admires and likes Gergiev without pretending to understand him, describes the process as follows: “Most other conductors hear the orchestra produce a certain type of sound, then react to it. Valery has a preconceived idea, and he works toward that goal until he reaches it. In the rehearsal, he micro-manages, works very hard on one particular phrase or passage. He leaves the macro-managing to the concert. Sometimes the whole form of the interpretation is revealed only in the concert. This keeps the orchestra on its toes.”



Gergiev’s conducting is more than merely dynamic. In the middle of chaos, he remains intensely calm. His motions on the podium are not manic but relaxed. Toradze, a round, ebullient Georgian who plays Falstaff to Gergiev’s Prince Hal, brushes aside the critical cliché that his friend deals principally in energy and force. “Of course, he has great grabbing powers,” Toradze told me in New York, sweating profusely after a madcap Gergiev rehearsal in which he launched into Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G standing up, because the piano stool had wandered off. “He will never produce elevator music. Or, if you get into his elevator, you may miss your floor. But it’s not just a matter of force—it’s also a matter of tone. Force is something that goes rapidly up and then rapidly down. A beautiful tone goes up slower and then it just floats.” Toradze got up to demonstrate the Gergiev pose and act out the Gergiev sound. “He leads with his chest, not with the chop of his hand. His forte is never *klahp;* it’s *braaah.*” Toradze breathes out slowly. “He doesn’t kick. He expands.” Salonen notices the same inward stillness. He says, “The performance is an oasis of peace and quiet. It’s the only time his phone isn’t ringing.”

Another unusual feature of Gergiev’s artistic makeup is a talent for administration. From the start, when he made his début at the Kirov, in 1978—

conducting Prokofiev's vast and complicated "War and Peace"—it was apparent that he had a gift for big operations. Ten years later, when his predecessor, Yuri Temirkanov, left the Kirov to take over the Leningrad Philharmonic, Gergiev, at the early age of thirty-five, was put in charge. He shook up the orchestra, hired many younger players, and began looking for opportunities in the West. Several singers he cultivated—notably, Borodina and the soprano Galina Gorchakova—went on to spectacular international careers. The Philips label, with Gergiev on its roster, became a recorded encyclopedia of Russian opera. Despite such successes, chaos threatened to overtake the Kirov in 1995, when bribery charges were levelled against the chief administrator and the head choreographer. They were detained while Gergiev was away conducting "The Queen of Spades" in New York. As John Ardoin describes it, Gergiev had to fight what amounted to a coup: there were those who wanted to dismantle the theatre completely. Gergiev held on to his power, and in 1996 Yeltsin gave him total control over both opera and ballet.

Gergiev is generally revered in Russia—in part because so many other Russian musicians have fled to bigger money in the West—but he is also much scrutinized and worried over. Balletomanes complain that he knows far less about ballet than about opera. Russians complain that tickets tend to be made more readily available to tourists, at greatly increased prices. There have been blowups as a result of Gergiev's peremptory manner. When he was appointed guest conductor of the Met, for example, it was front-page news in Russia—"THE GERGIEV WE'VE LOST," read one pessimistic headline—and it turned out that he had failed to inform the state bureaucracy of his new job. The head of the Russian Department of Information and Culture protested publicly, and Gergiev was mobbed by alarmed journalists. A phone call sorted out the flap.

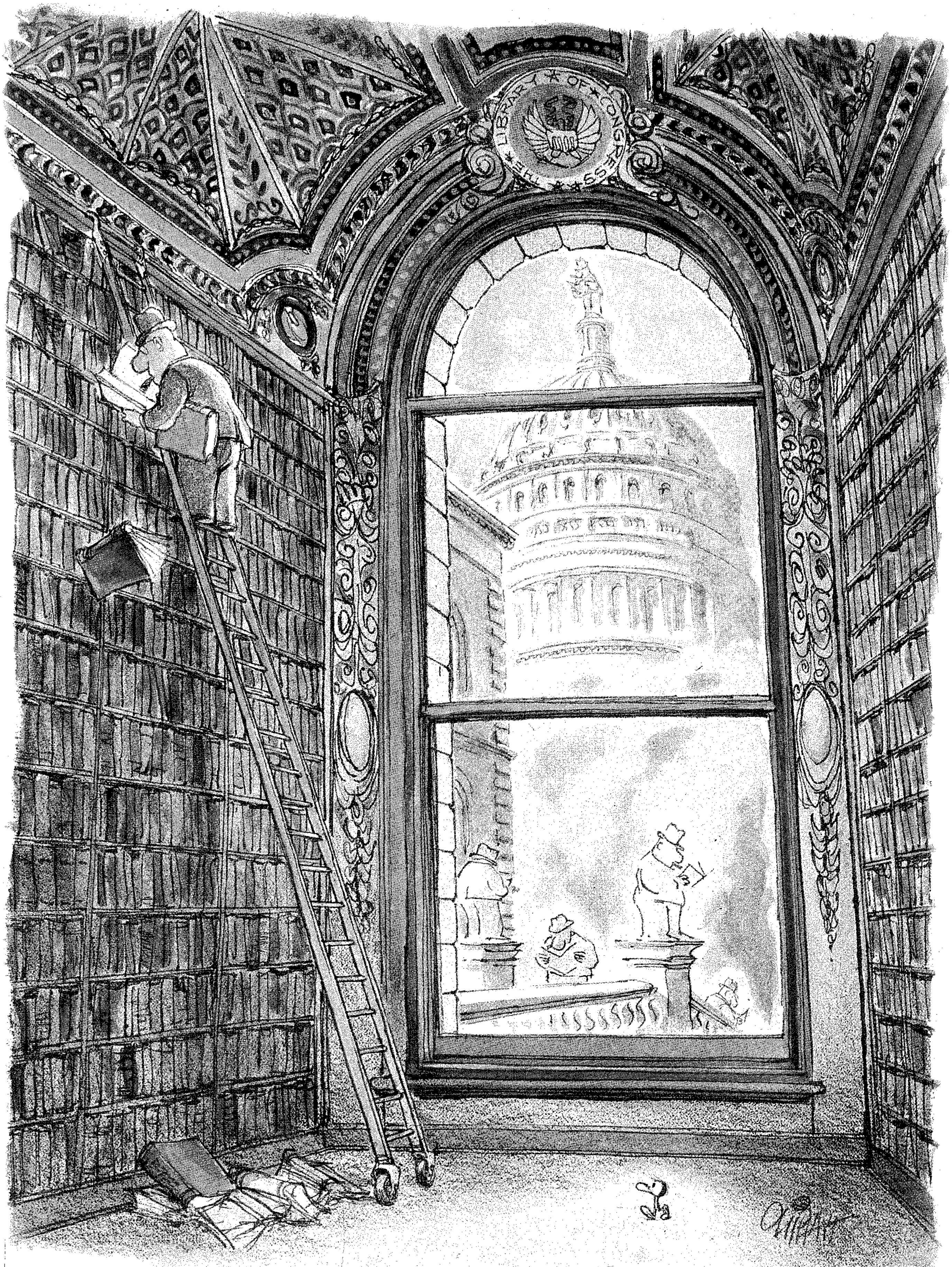
It's not hard to find a reason for Gergiev's lack of consideration for the bureaucracy: this year he was promised a budget of thirteen and a half million dollars and he was given six million. "They told me that because of a plane crash in Siberia I cannot have my budget," Gergiev complained to me. "I always try to give a positive message about Russia, but at the moment I can't—not at the end of the financial year." Before long, however, he was again speaking effusively about his theatre. "It is more spontaneous, improvised, it is sometimes out of stereo, out of order," he said. "But there is a strange order in this out-of-order which we have at the Kirov. Yes, too many things depend on me personally, but this is the only way I can see to be productive in a country where things do not work. Either you have to leave the country, as many artists did, or you have to struggle to overcome these problems. You have to rely first of all on your friends and your orchestra and your trust in each other, instead of contracting them. If you start to negotiate a five-year contract with the Kirov Orchestra, it will be *comic*. It will be a comic situation because the government cannot guarantee the budget. The government cannot guarantee the government. You never know what kind of Communists or Socialists or President or military dictator will come along. You'd better just do what you can do tomorrow rather than think ahead seven years. But we will do the 'Ring' in the year 2000—if we are alive."

GERGIEV faces a very different way of life when he comes to conduct the Met or the New York Philharmonic. There is no problem with money, but with the money come restrictions. In Russia, he can rehearse far into the night if he so wishes. At the Met, the stage manager says, at a preordained time, "Maestro, we have to stop." Also, American players respond less positively than Russians to displays of peremptoriness. One Philharmonic musician complained to me that Gergiev acted like a "priest figure" and talked too much. This is a strange complaint, given the parade of high priests and martinets who have led American orchestras over the years; Gergiev is a model of politeness next to a Toscanini or a Szell. In the rehearsals I watched at the Philharmonic, he was at pains to couch his requests in such gracious phrases as "I would welcome a short diminuendo" and "Let us respect Mahler's staccato," rather than outright demands of "Diminuendo!" and "Staccato!" Sometimes, though, he slipped into unattractive sarcasm. He singled out one musician and snapped, "If you are a great player—and you must be a great player, or you would not be in this orchestra—you can give me this color that I want." There was an audible moan from the orchestra.

It's a tense negotiation, the back-and-forth between an orchestra and a guest conductor. At this point, the Philharmonic players haven't worked with Gergiev long enough to realize what kind of sound he is driving at, and Gergiev is still mastering American orchestra psychology. "It seemed as if he went in and out of favor with different sections, lost them and then won them back," the conductor Richard Westerfield told me after one rehearsal. "A lot of European conductors are shocked when they find the orchestra talking back, but he seems to enjoy it." During a rehearsal of the Mahler

ROGUE'S GALLERY

One does not usually associate the austere and archival spirit of the Library of Congress with satiric cruelty and anarchic wit, but the new exhibition of works by Pat Oliphant, perhaps the country's finest political cartoonist, seems perfectly comfortable in the library's Jefferson Building, where it remains on view through July 6th. Oliphant left his native Australia for the United States in 1964, and since then his cartoons, carried by hundreds of newspapers, have been populated by all the usual suspects—especially politicians afflicted by arrogance, cluelessness, or satyriasis. Recently, he has turned to painting and sculpture as well, and the exhibit includes not only cartoons but also works like "The Fixer," a startling, vulture-like bronze of the Presidential adviser Clark Clifford, and "The Flimflam Man," a large drawing in charcoal of a foxy Bill Clinton running a shell game. At the library (and in a related show at the Susan Conway Gallery in Georgetown), Oliphant has granted the terrifying cast of the late twentieth century an alarming, and somehow wondrous, curtain call.



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Sixth, the French horns actively rebelled against Gergiev's habit of stopping the orchestra and discussing minute details. "Just tell us. Is it going to be slow or fast?" they called out. Gergiev stared at them for a moment and then said, "We are not there yet. I will tell you when we get there." Which was to say, "I'll show you with my hands." The passage went off smoothly. "Thank you," said the horns. "Thank *you*," Gergiev replied, with an insinuating smile. The rest of the orchestra laughed—not an everyday occurrence. In that negotiation he got the psychology right: American players like to be shown, not talked to.

Gergiev knew what he was doing with his mixture of politesse and aggression. He did not want to produce yet another smooth evening for the well-to-do Philharmonic subscribers. "The musicians have played this piece too much," he said to me. "They are on autopilot. I am in the process of destroying the autopilot. I am making a mess of it, and then I will try to build something in its place." I asked him if he cared whether the orchestra liked him or not. "Well, ten or fifteen players came up to me and said, 'It's like a new piece. We never heard it like this.' Maybe some other people don't like it. I don't know. This is how I work. Each time I come back, we know each other better, and each time we will begin a little farther along." At present, Gergiev is farther along in his relationship with the Met. His "Boris Godunov" in December came close to his "dark, round, deep" ideal. The concurrent Philharmonic performances—of the Mahler Sixth and "The Rite of Spring"—were more uneven. Still, they had startling force. There was a coiled violence in the first movement of the Mahler, exhausted beauty in the Andante. The "Rite" was less brilliant and mechanical than it often seems in modern performances: it sounded like a group of wounded folk songs crawling out of bass-heavy darkness.

On the second night of the Mahler series, Gergiev conducted the Sixth Symphony not with a baton but with a chopstick. Afterward, over sushi, he explained why. "It started with Gegam Grigorian, one of our very fine tenors at the Kirov. He was having Chinese food with me once and dared me to conduct with a chopstick. So I did, one night when he had a very dramatic entrance, and he had a hard time concentrating. Anyway, tonight I used the chopstick in honor of my doctor, Michael Liang, also my very good friend, who was in the audience." The doctor had been giving Gergiev chelation therapy—an intravenous procedure designed to detoxify the bloodstream and remove heavy metals from the body. The orchestra did not have this information and considered the use of a chopstick capricious and bizarre. "We found it extremely amusing," an orchestra member said to me, in a way that implied the opposite. The chopstick seemed to be not just a tribute to Dr. Liang but also another psychological ploy—another way to mess up the autopilot. I was struck by the schoolboyish glee with which this supposedly obsessive, workaholic conductor talked about his chopstick. Something in Gergiev reminds me of those village devils in Gogol tales who leave perplexity and mayhem in their wake.

Victoria Roberts

"You don't __look__ like you filed."

As I travelled with Gergiev, I kept wondering what made him drive himself so hard. My working hypothesis was that he followed some version of the great Jimmy Buffett saying "If we weren't all crazy, we would all go insane." I thought I received a better answer toward the end of a rehearsal of "The Flying Dutchman," in the overheated attic practice room of the Maryinsky Theatre. Gergiev stopped suddenly in the middle of a passage and jabbered for several minutes in Russian. I had no idea what was going to happen next. Suddenly, the harp began tracing chords in ghostly B minor: it was not Wagner but, instead, the Prelude to "The Invisible City of Kitezh," Rimsky-Korsakov's second-to-last opera and his greatest work. There was a practical reason for this switch: the orchestra was to play excerpts from "Kitezh" on an upcoming tour and needed to reacquaint itself with the score. But I had the impression that Gergiev was also conducting "Kitezh" simply to savor the sound. With string tremolos shimmering a few feet from my ears, it was just about the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard: music from nowhere, an apparition, a mirage of winter heat.

In Russian folklore, Kitezh is a city that vanishes from sight when marauders approach. As it disappears, its bells keep ringing through the fog. Rimsky-Korsakov lavished on this scenario the utmost refinements of his style: magically precise orchestration; attenuated, silvery melodies; strange, static, symmetrical harmonies in his self-styled "tone-semitone" scale. The libretto, by Vladimir Belsky, is unusually fine. Anna Akhmatova admired it, and fashioned from it one of her most majestic poems, "The Way of All the Earth." She wrote, "I will return to you before nightfall, / People of Kitezh."

Kitezh was the destination she imagined for herself after death: the city of art, the city of Pushkin, Petersburg as an immortal construct of the mind. The Petersburg historian Solomon Volkov writes of the opera, "This work seemed to foretell the further metamorphosis of the Petersburg mythos by praising not the victors but the vanquished—their valor in the face of inexorable evil power." All this ran through my mind as I was listening to the Kirov Orchestra that afternoon. The full import of the music hit me. It was a vestige of a mostly vanished Petersburg world—the cult of "Hellenistic paleness," as Joseph Brodsky defined it.

A strange thing about Gergiev is that although he is a brilliant talker he leaves some deeper things unsaid. He can intellectualize on demand, but he prefers to speak in more concrete terms about pieces he's played, places in which he's played them, people he's played them with. He didn't try to put "Kitezh" into words when I asked him what the music meant to him at that moment. "Fantastic, fantastic music" was all he said. Gergiev's performances are really a kind of intellectual argument in themselves, to the effect that Russian composers are not virtuosos or eccentrics or genius amateurs—which is how standard histories generally treat them—but, rather, musical auteurs, whose output must be taken whole. Almost single-handed, Gergiev has erased the common view of Rimsky-Korsakov as a mere orchestral colorist, presenting him instead as a major operatic thinker. He is now engaged in a similar mission on behalf of Prokofiev. A production of Prokofiev's wistful Mozartean farce "Betrothal in a Monastery" will shortly be seen in the Kirov's festival at the Met, and new productions of "The Gambler" and "War and Peace" are planned for later seasons. Gergiev and Toradze have made a blistering recording of the complete Prokofiev piano concertos. It's difficult to think of a conductor in recent memory who has attempted this kind of wholesale reorientation of the repertory.

Gergiev's argument is not only about Russian music. He is conducting more Wagner, more Berlioz, more Mahler. If there is a general thread that ties his interpretations together, it may be a passion for chords, for the art of harmony, for the beauty of the vertical. Through much of the twentieth century, the fashion has been for linear thinking, driving counterpoint, structure and coherence and precision. Gergiev, to the distress of some, is not so much interested in these things. In rehearsals, he likes to talk about chords. I heard him say, variously: "I want to bring out the strangeness of the harmony." "You have to hear the harmony moving. If it's too loud or too fast, the harmony disappears." "Each harmony is a solo." And "Harmony, harmony, harmony!" He separates chords, defines them, and then gives each one a visceral connection to the next. Any moment of any piece, he suggests, can have the same instantly hypnotic effect as the opening of "Kitezh." This is the approach of a pianist who has adopted the orchestra as his instrument: simultaneous entries of instruments are cued not with hard, pointing gestures but with a liquid, dropping movement of the wrist. The chords are rolled a little, rocked from side to side—first bass, then treble.

I decided early on that Gergiev's piano-playing must be the key to his brazen, secretive art. But I had not had a chance to hear him play. Then, at my last meeting with him, in London, we had a late dinner in the Palm Court of the Waldorf Hotel. Midnight in the Palm Court: an appropriately operatic setting for Gergiev's last performance on my behalf. Although the restaurant was closed, he persuaded the night staff to serve us dinner. The room was mostly dark, despite a spread of icy white Christmas lights. There was a grand piano next to us, and I pointed at it encouragingly. Gergiev sat down and played a sumptuous sequence of chords from "Lohengrin." The sound was, as Toradze had promised it would be, huge, beautiful, orchestral. It was mesmerizing, and it cast a strange aura over this already strange room. The Waldorf was becoming Kitezh. Then the playing stopped. "Quite a good opera, yes?" Gergiev said. "Food! I am by now extremely hungry." From the other side of the room a waiter was approaching nervously with dinner. ◆

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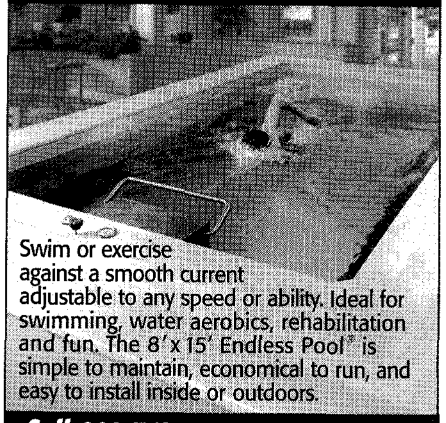

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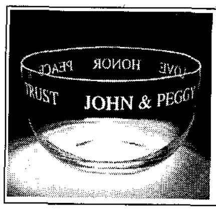

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BOOKS

SEX, SCANDALS, AND SUFFRAGE

The misadventures of an unlikely feminist.

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

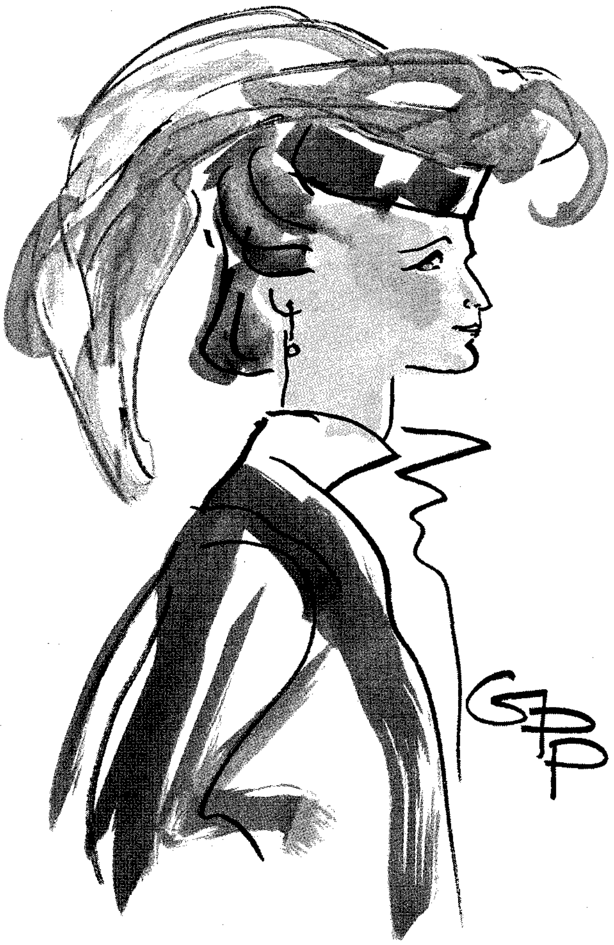
VICTORIA WOODHULL, America's most bizarre feminist, was taught to hustle almost from the moment she could walk. Her story begins in 1838, in Homer, Ohio, where she was the sixth of ten unruly children born to shiftless parents, who were looked on as town trash by any community in which they tried to live. From the time she was five, she was sent out by her father, Buck Claflin, to do laundry and scrub floors in neighbors' houses, but Claflin soon found a more lucrative way to make use of his strikingly beautiful daughter. It was the heyday of occultism, and Victoria and her equally pretty sister, Tennessee, displayed early in life a gift for making contact with the beyond. Claflin put both girls to work as psychics—telling fortunes, or communing with the dead at a dollar per séance. Sometimes he even starved them for days at a time to heighten their psychic powers.

Victoria had been exploited during much of her youth, and she soon developed phenomenal skills for exploiting others in order to achieve her ambitions. Although she always stayed in close touch with her "spirit guides," she would eventually become a star of the suffragist movement: the first woman to found a brokerage firm; the first woman allowed to testify before a congressional committee; and the first woman ever to run for President of the United States. Her rags-to-riches saga—which began in an era when both occultism and mainstream religion were becoming big business—is one of brazen opportunism, sensational sexual scandals, and formidable survival skills. It has been told before, notably by Emanie Sachs (in 1928) and by Lois Beachy Underhill (in 1995), but never as rivetingly as it is told in the two books under review.

Mary Gabriel's "Notorious Victoria: The Life of Victoria Woodhull, Uncensored" (Algonquin; $24.95) is a straightforward, lucidly narrated biography. Barbara Goldsmith's "Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull" (Knopf; $30) is, as its title implies, a more ambitious text—an often brilliant, multi-tentacled exploration of Victorian sexual politics. If the subject appeals to you, read Gabriel first, to get the basic facts, or you may have trouble with Goldsmith's numerous digressions.

In an era when women activists generally came from genteel, or even patrician, backgrounds, Victoria's origins were singularly humble. The tyrannical Buck Claflin was an alcoholic and a petty criminal who was once run out of town on charges of robbing the mail and committing arson. Victoria's first husband, Canning Woodhull, whom she married at the age of fifteen after falling gravely ill from overwork, was a seriously alcoholic medical quack. Supporting themselves by Victoria's diverse talents—for clairvoyance, for stage acting, and also for prostitution—the couple and their two children lived a life as nomadic and disorderly as her parents had, in California, the Midwest, and the Deep South.

And then, in St. Louis, the twenty-six-year-old Victoria met Colonel James Harvey Blood. Blood was a married Civil War veteran who had once served as the city's auditor; he was also a dedicated spiritualist, and an activist in anti-slavery and suffragist crusades. Within months, the lovers had divorced their respective spouses and married each other. Blood took over the management of Victoria's clairvoyance practice, and for the next decade he served as mentor, speechwriter, and impresario for every one of her ventures. During a séance, the spirit of Demosthenes, so Victoria claimed, instructed her to move to New York. She followed his orders, arriving in the Big City with a squalling brood of some twenty relatives in tow—Colonel Blood, her parents, her children, her destitute former husband, her hoydenish sister Tennessee, from whom she remained inseparable for much of her life, and an as-



Woodhull: "We mean treason; we mean secession, and on a thousand times grander scale than was that of the south."

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

sortment of other siblings, in various stages of inebriation. One of Woodhull's many oddities, both her biographers emphasize, was an unswerving loyalty to her sordidly venal family, who would discredit her repeatedly throughout her life.

In New York, in 1868, Victoria forged a new friendship that would prove to be one of the most lucrative connections of her career: she ingratiated herself with the bawdy Commodore Vanderbilt, who was by then a widower, and committed, like nearly everyone in the Woodhull epic, to the solaces of spiritualism. Victoria ministered to his soul by putting him in touch with his dead mother, the only woman he ever truly loved. She satisfied his lust by placing her luscious sister Tennessee, whom he called "my little sparrow," in his bed. The two sisters gained such ascendancy over the aging playboy (Woodhull's spirit guides also gave Vanderbilt many hot tips on the stock market) that he financed their first commercial enterprise, the brokerage house Woodhull, Claflin & Co. The Bewitching Brokers, as the belles were called, drew many visitors to their opulent Broad Street offices, and were soon able to move the raucous Woodhull-Claflin clan—including her ex-husband—into a mansion on Murray Hill. They also founded a muckraking publication, *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, whose banner motto was "Progress! Free Thought! Untrammelled Lives!" With the faithful Colonel Blood as managing editor, the gazette soon drew twenty thousand readers a week. And in the spring of 1870 it brazenly announced Victoria Woodhull's candidacy for the Presidency of the United States, running on a platform that featured female suffrage, the right to divorce, and free love.

WAS Woodhull a struggling mother and committed activist, or a manipulative publicity hound? Her biographers admit that she was a bit of both. Within two years of moving to the East Coast, this Becky Sharp of radical causes had convinced a Massachusetts congressman, the Civil War hero Benjamin Butler, that the House Judiciary Committee should pass a bill legalizing female suffrage under the terms

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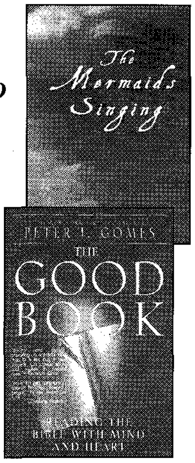

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A budding young literary talent is ripe for discovery this month as well. With ***THE MERMAIDS SINGING***, **Lisa Carey** makes an impressive debut as a novelist. Carey's story is set on an island off the coast of west Ireland where myth is as powerful as truth, and it concerns three generations of remarkable women—grandmother, mother and daughter—their unique dreams, the resentments that separate them, and the love and need that motivates each in her search for a place to call home.

It's thought that flowers in **Peter J. Gomes**'s ***THE GOOD BOOK***. The preacher to Harvard University, Reverend Gomes explores the ever-evolving role of the Bible in the politics, culture, and lives of Americans today, as he cogently examines what the ancient text tells us about women, race, homosexuality, joy, suffering, wealth, science, and mystery. In this *New York Times* bestseller, Gomes gives us all the tools we need to make the Bible a dynamic, living, and transforming part of our daily existence.

We'll talk again.

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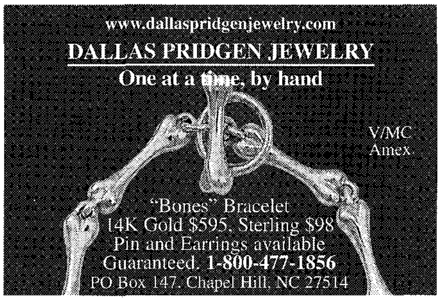

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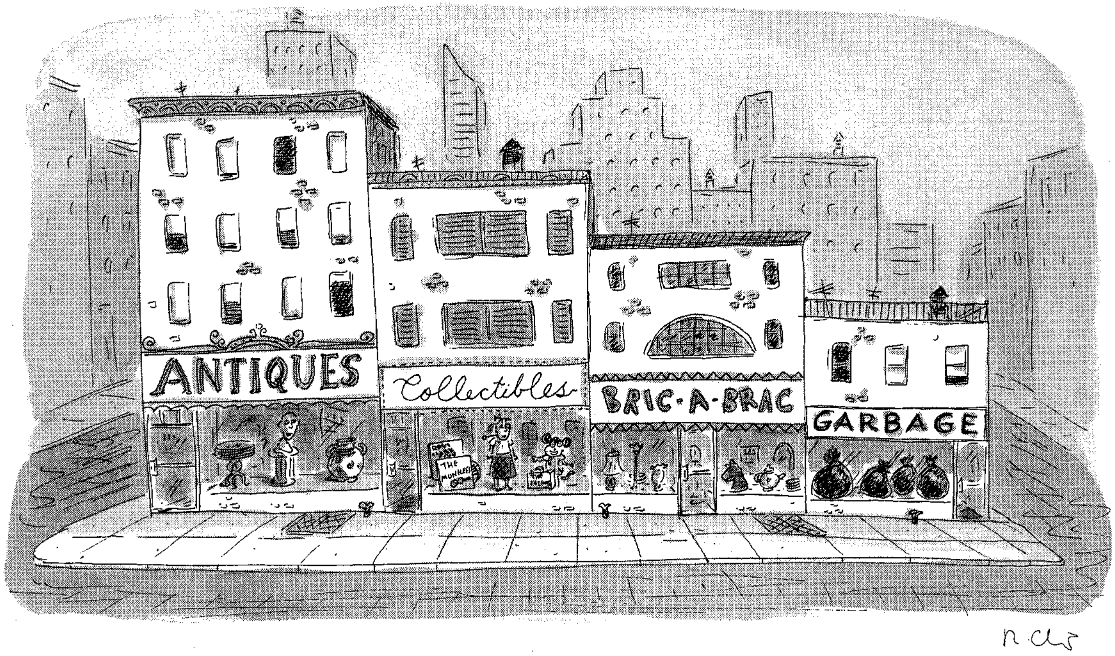


of the Fourteenth Amendment. The petition was politely tabled, but Woodhull's appearance served her ambitions, for it gave her a chance to display her splendid oratorical skills. Susan B. Anthony attended the congressional meeting, and asked her to address the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which Anthony had recently founded with Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In 1871, the American suffragist movement was deeply divided over the priority ranking of female suffrage and black suffrage, and Anthony hoped that Woodhull might revitalize their cause; when she appeared before a packed convention hall that February, the meeting's organizers may have got more than they bargained for. "We mean treason; we mean secession, and on a thousand times grander scale than was that of the south," Woodhull proclaimed in summing up her demands for full constitutional equality. "We are plotting revolution; we will overslough this bogus republic and plant a government of righteousness in its stead." Loud cheers and hundreds of fluttering handkerchiefs greeted her remarks. "It is ahead of anything, said or written," Susan B. Anthony wrote to Woodhull from the Midwest upon reading the speech. "Bless you dear soul for all you are doing to help strike the chains from woman's spirit."

But during the next few years most of the women who had so warmly embraced Woodhull would ostracize her from the suffrage movement. Gabriel narrates her protagonist's downfall—which was caused by a blend of naïveté and crashing arrogance—with as much verve as she has displayed in chronicling her audacious rise. In 1872, Woodhull grievously deepened the split in the suffrage movement by founding a third, rival group, the People's Party, to support her bid for the Presidency. This move led Susan B. Anthony to accuse her of being dominated by "*men* spirits," and of "run[ning] her craft into her port and none other." Woodhull also made the faux pas of allying herself with the alarmingly militant International Workingmen's Association, and her weekly was the first paper in America to publish Karl Marx's "Communist Manifesto." She further alienated her centrist followers by preaching that much marital sex was a form of "sanctioned rape." ("Night after night... millions of poor, heart-broken, suffering wives are compelled to minister to the lechery of insatiable husbands," she declared.)

Victoria's family played an equally critical role in her demise. One of her sisters—the alcoholic, opium-addicted Utica—viciously heckled her lectures; and her mother, incited by mercenary family infighting, initiated a lawsuit against Colonel Blood, which tainted Victoria's reputation further by drawing attention to her domestic arrangements. In 1871, she was accused of having polygamous relations with Blood and her former husband.

Nothing, however, harmed Woodhull more than her garish exposé of the sexual scandals confronting the country's most celebrated clergyman, Henry Ward Beecher. Beecher was the son of the eminent Second Great Awakening preacher Lyman Beecher. He was also the brother of three famous women: the writer Harriet Beecher Stowe; the popular educator Catharine Beecher; and the suffragist Isabella Beecher Hooker, who for years was Victoria Woodhull's most loyal supporter. For the annals of the Beecher imbroglio, which bitterly divided these siblings and became the greatest domestic scandal of the century, turn to Goldsmith's hefty tome, which has rendered its Sturm und Drang as vividly as any book in recent memory.

BY the late eighteen-sixties, when Victoria Woodhull was shoving her way into the reform movement, the flamboyant Henry Ward Beecher had become the uncontested media star of the American church—an "evangelical Bacchus" doling out a "Gospel of Gush," as one of his more critical peers put it. A consummate showman, a superb orator, and a bon vivant who made up for his wife's austerity by going on lavish spending sprees for posh antiques, precious stones, and Oriental rugs, Beecher readily packed three thousand people into his congregationalist Plymouth Church, in Brooklyn, for his Sunday sermons. Special vessels, known as "Beecher's boats," ran across the East River to ferry his fans over from Manhattan. His feel-good message of Christ as an all-forgiving Great Lover—a teaching radically opposed to his father's vengeful, fire-and-brimstone Calvinism—

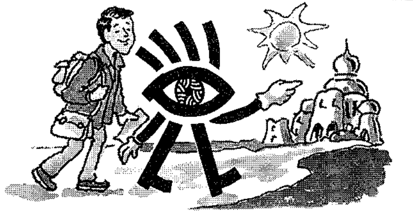
had turned his parish into a huge financial asset. Plymouth Church was so profitable that back in 1862, when its most prominent parishioner and backer heard his wife confess on her deathbed that she had been repeatedly seduced by their pastor, he had preferred to remain silent about his cuckolded state, because he had so much financially at stake in the stability of Beecher's parish.

But another parishioner of Beecher's—his closest friend, a handsome, popular poet and journalist called Theodore Tilton—reacted more vengefully to the preacher's seduction of *his* wife, the petite, adorable Lib. Trysting during the many long trips that Tilton undertook in order to promote the cause of women's suffrage, Beecher coyly referred to his encounters with Lib as "nest-hiding." Lib soon became pregnant by her pastor and, racked by guilt when her husband came home, she told him everything. Enraged, Tilton (who had his own lover in another city) shared his troubles with his friends in the women's movement, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton heard the story again from Lib herself when, during an overnight stay at the Tiltons', she snuggled up in bed—platonically, one may assume—with her hostess. And Stanton soon shared what she called the "*scandalum magnatum*" with her new suffragist colleague Victoria Woodhull.

Stanton's gossip offered Woodhull an opportunity to grab the limelight again. Smarting from accusations levelled at her own ménage à trois, which had led the national press to malign her as Mrs. Satan, she published an open letter in the *Times* alleging that her critics "preach against free love openly, practice it secretly." She knew of "a public teacher of eminence," she intimated, who enjoyed free love with the wife of another very public figure. The allusions were barely veiled. Beecher and Tilton, during a brief reconciliation, decided that, for the sake of their families, Woodhull had to be stopped. Tilton, dispatched to shut her up by any means he could, struck up a warm friendship with the adventuress, and wrote an enthusiastic biography, which hailed her as the "Joan of Arc" of the women's movement. He seems to have even been her lover for a few months, before they had an inevitable falling-out, which was caused by a severe escalation of the Woodhull-Beecher vendetta: Harriet Beecher Stowe came to her beloved brother's defense by satirizing Woodhull, in her widely read novel "My Wife and I," as the foulmouthed vixen Audacia Dangyereyes. More than skilled in the art of blackmail, Woodhull rebutted Stowe by putting out a special edition of her weekly—an edition that sold some hundred thousand copies for as much as forty dollars apiece—which openly accused Beecher of being "a poltroon, a coward and a sneak" for not acknowledging his practice of free love. But in the skillfully devious Henry Ward Beecher, Woodhull had finally met her match.

Tilton soon brought his own suit against the preacher. Alternately coerced by her husband and by her pastor, the pathetic Mrs. Tilton in turn retracted, reaffirmed, and again retracted her original confession of having had an affair with Beecher. The pastor rewarded his lover's fidelity by testifying that he had been the victim of her "unsought" affection, and he savagely denounced Woodhull and other suffragists who testified against him in court; they were "human hyenas," he declared, who were responsible for "loathsome scandals." A shrewd observer of the national scene, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had the last word on Tilton's and Woodhull's failure to bring the villain down: "The bondholders . . . stand around Mr. Beecher . . . not loving truth and justice less, but their own pockets more." Many Plymouth Church parishioners who had come to despise Beecher did indeed protect their vested interests by testifying in his favor. And, notwithstanding the evidence against the preacher—in letters to friends he had referred to his sinful deeds and had threatened suicide—the Tilton-Beecher trial, which made headline news in the nation's papers for the first six months of 1875, resulted in a hung jury.

The evangelist of Christ as Great Lover left behind him a spate of ruined lives. Theodore Tilton, bankrupted by the trial, immigrated to France to write bad poetry and drink in cafés. Lib Tilton, left penniless with four small chil-



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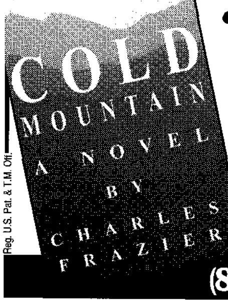

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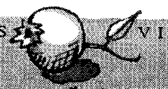

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dren, soon went blind, and found her principal solace in communing with the dead. (Shortly before her death, a decade later, she once more confirmed her affair with Beecher, but by that time no one cared.) Victoria Woodhull, whose finances had become severely strained, was repeatedly jailed, at Beecher's instigation, on grounds of sending obscenity through the mail. Yet the odor of scandal that now emanated from the patrician preacher only enhanced his popularity on the lecture circuit. Goldsmith might have noted, in her beautifully documented account of the Tilton-Beecher-Woodhull brouhaha, that soon after Henry Ward Beecher's trial ended he delivered a hundred and thirty-two lectures in the space of a hundred and thirty-five days, to an estimated total audience of half a million people, sometimes making a thousand dollars per performance—a fee that approximates, in contemporary purchasing power, the fees doled out to our own current media stars.

As for Woodhull's next four decades, which Goldsmith dispatches in five pages, turn back to the Gabriel book, which gives the suffragist's ironic destiny the space it deserves. Woodhull's last years in America were wretched: by 1876, she had been deprived of the aging Commodore Vanderbilt's financial backing and of Blood's moral support (for reasons that remain unclear, they divorced that year); she was evicted from her mansion; her brokerage firm and her weekly were closed; and her lecture audiences had diminished to the point where, in desperation, she took to praising the "divine provision" of marriage. She complained that even her favorite spirit guides, Napoleon and Josephine, had abandoned her. Yet leave it to Woodhull to hit gold again: when Vanderbilt died, in 1877, bequeathing most of his fortune to his son William, the rest of his offspring contested the will, whereupon William, terrified that the Woodhull sisters might testify that his father had been unduly influenced by spirits, gave them a hundred thousand dollars to leave the country.

And so Victoria Woodhull, her rowdy family once more in tow, settles comfortably in London, begins a new lecture circuit, and wins the heart of a shy, progressive millionaire bachelor, John Biddulph Martin. They marry after a few years of courtship, and she henceforth dedicates her energies to her husband, her children, and, above all, to the attainment of respectability. In her conservative publication, *The Humanitarian*, she renounces free love as "deep infamy." In 1897, when Victoria is fifty-nine, her husband dies, leaving her nearly a million dollars. A few years later, she founds the Ladies Automobile Club. Nurtured by her devoted spinster daughter, Zula, she spends most of her time at her vast country estate, forcing her chauffeurs to drive her Talbot-Darracq at the highest possible speeds.

Victoria Woodhull Martin ran her country estate as if it were a benevolent feudal kingdom, feeding and clothing the poor and building public housing, and she was spoken of sweetly by nearly everyone. And, although she still occasionally communicated with spirits, in her last years she was so afraid of death that she spent her nights sitting upright in a chair—which is where it came to claim her, in 1927, at the venerable age of eighty-eight. Her former "sisters" in the suffrage movement, Anthony and Stanton, had preceded her by a couple of decades. They had countered the mayhem she once sowed in their ranks by excluding her from the later volumes of their vastly influential "History of Woman Suffrage"—thus, in effect, writing her out of women's history for many years to come.

Mary Gabriel and Barbara Goldsmith face a formidable problem in their task of resurrecting Victoria Woodhull: however admirable her boldness, her will power, and most of her goals, however touching her loyalty to her ghastly family and her vulnerable children, she is very difficult to like and even more difficult to trust. She is too unscrupulous an operator, too much of a turncoat, too pushy and flashy and self-serving, and, above all, too prone to racketeering and self-mythologizing, to ever gain our sympathy: at no moment do we feel the genuineness of her stated ideals.

Goldsmith tries to overcome the quandary of Woodhull's obnoxiousness by drawing a broad sociosexual canvas of the late nineteenth century which stretches far beyond her heroine's saga. But her analysis of the links between women's rights and spiritualism is meagre. A serious cultural appraisal of that connection would have to explore such critical factors as the dominance of women in sectarian cults (Ann Lee's Shakers, Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science) and also in the Second Great Awakening's revival meetings; the prevalence of religiously oriented women in the voluntary associations—temperance leagues, abolitionist groups—upon which the suffrage movement was modelled; the domestication and feminization of death effected by American Calvinism's increasing rejection of the doctrine of Hell; and several other cultural phenomena that the author never engages fully.

Another serious flaw taints both books: we cannot visualize Woodhull, or hear the timbre of her voice. Gabriel and Goldsmith, perhaps because they are unable to grasp the core of her identity (who could, upon being confronted with such a chameleon?), are rich in scandal but woefully short on sensory and psychological data. We are left with no sense of the emotional texture of Victoria's pivotal relationships—with her sister Tennessee and, particularly, with the devoted Blood, who in almost every way created her. In fact, it is downright humiliating to read the saga of a soi-disant feminist pioneer and realize that its true emotional centerpiece, its most vital character, is not its female subject but the Lovelace who played a role in bringing her down. Henry Ward Beecher is the only individual in these books whom we can truly see, smell, touch—with his unctuous smile, his tousled matinée-idol hair, the handfuls of opals he fingers in his pockets. We know that he was corrupt, and we may hate him, but he satisfies us because we know precisely who he is. As for Victoria Woodhull, she paid a serious price for her opportunistic donning of so many coats: notwithstanding these richly picaresque and accomplished biographies, the pith of her identity remains obscured. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

CHARMING BILLY, by Alice McDermott (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22). McDermott's immensely accomplished and pleasurable fourth novel opens at the wake of the debonair Billy Lynch—gifted talker, abandoned suitor, faithful husband, devout Catholic, raging alcoholic. It then ranges back and forth through dozens of family theories and anecdotes to answer the question of what did or didn't make him who he was. At once a love story, a portrait of Irish Catholic Queens, and an ode to an edenic postwar East Hampton, this novel honors the consequences of everyday decisions, both sacred and profane, burnishing them in the retelling to a high shine.

THE RICH MAN'S TABLE, by Scott Spencer (Knopf; $23). Spencer is a master at setting down the obsessions, erotic and otherwise, of troubled heroes; his new novel imagines what happens when a young teacher, Billy Rothschild, learns that the father who deserted him is the legendary rock singer-songwriter Luke Fairchild (clearly modelled on Bob Dylan). The son is transfixed almost from the moment he sees Luke on an album cover, with his "zonked blue eyes, and a wild meringue of auburn curls," and he sets out to study the mysteries of his putative father's life and art—to become, in effect, his biographer. The story that emerges, told with wit, assurance, and perhaps too many faux Dylan lyrics, is also a somewhat sour requiem for the sixties.

TENDER AT THE BONE: GROWING UP AT THE TABLE, by Ruth Reichl (Random House; $23). This lovely memoir by the New York *Times* restaurant critic brings to mind the writing on home cooking by the late Laurie Colwin. Reichl's early life at the table, however, was more perilous than nurturing (her mother's nickname was the Queen of Mold), which led to her vocation: eating out. In a sterling chapter we find young Ruth desperately trying to steer her manic mother's unwary guests toward something edible. It's a job she does now for all and sundry in her columns, and whose intimate imperatives she illuminates in this graceful book.

TIJUANA BIBLES, by Bob Adelman (Simon & Schuster; $24). Anticipating the irreverence of *Mad* magazine, the explicit sex of underground comix, and the D.I.Y. aesthetic of latter-day zines, Tijuana Bibles were probably America's most popular pornography in the days before *Playboy*. These eight-page under-the-counter pamphlets, which first flourished in the nineteen-thirties, depicted bawdy episodes in the lives of Popeye, Blondie, Betty Boop, Amos 'n' Andy, and an assortment of real-life movie stars and folk heroes. Commentary by Richard Merkin and Art Spiegelman elevates the collection beyond titillating curiosity; charming and evocative, these artifacts present a little-known cultural history, displaying, in Spiegelman's words, a "peculiar combination of debauchery and innocence."

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ACROSS

1	PATH (*pass* lisped)
4	ALPS (anag.)
8	DRACULA (anag.)
9	OBOIST (hidden)
10	MOURNING (*morning* hom.)
12	INCH (anag.)
14	T(U)SK
16	AMEN-ABLE (pun)
17	A + P-PEAL
18	A(CUT)ELY (*Yale* anag.)
19	NE(X)T
20	S + LID

DOWN

1	PROM + P.T.
2	T(ROUSSEAU)X
3	H + AIRY
5	LUTINE BELL (anag.)
6	PLAN + C + K (ref. Max Planck)
7	SANG (2 defs.)
11	PU + MICE (*up* rev.)
13	HEELED (2 defs.)
15	TAPES (anag.)
16	ALAN (hidden)

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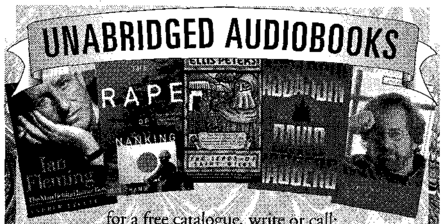

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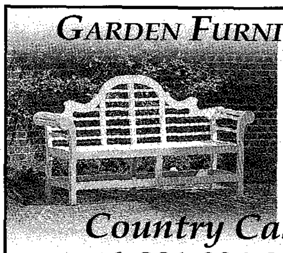
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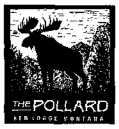
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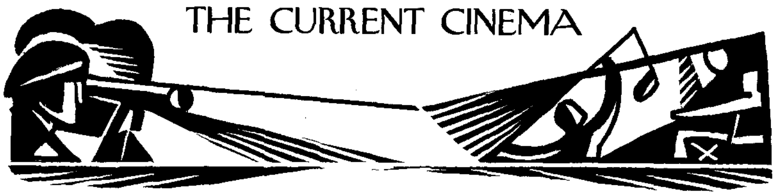


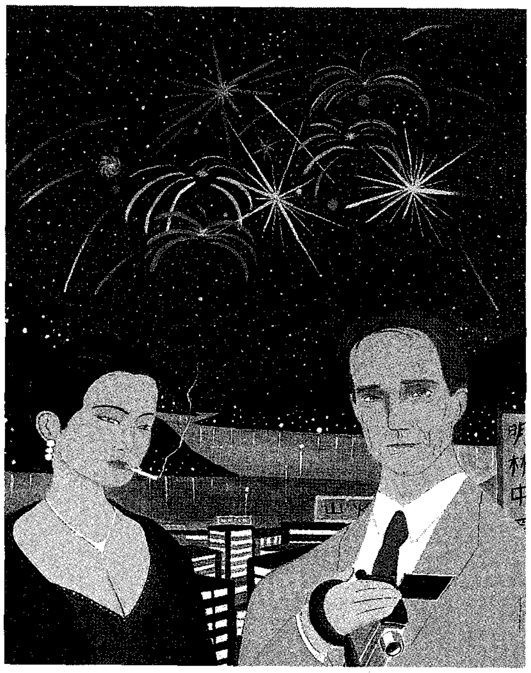
THE END OF THE AFFAIR

Wayne Wang's farewell to Hong Kong.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

THERE'S a certain kind of movie that insinuates itself into your consciousness, catching your attention not so much by diverting you from your life as by temporarily replacing the contents of your imagination with its own. Such movies—Nicolas Roeg's "Don't Look Now" (1973) and Alain Tanner's "In the White City" (1983) are two dissimilar examples that come to mind—are rarely epic in feel or scope, and they exist just off to the side of the cultural moment, rather than embracing it. At their best, they absorb you on a deeper level than mere self-forgetfulness: they relieve you of the burden of being stuck inside your own skin and allow you to inhabit other selves. The distinction is subtle but real: it's the difference between imagining yourself being loved by Leonardo DiCaprio and imagining what it's like to be someone utterly unlike yourself—a woman who has unsettling visions while in Venice recovering from the death of her young daughter, or a Swiss seaman who's jumped ship in Lisbon.

Watching Wayne Wang's "Chinese Box," I became a dying journalist, infatuated with a city and with a particular person in that city. I became, that is, compelled by the movie's obsessions, although I can't say that prior to seeing it I had been much concerned with the fate of Hong Kong. The movie opens in a cacophonous burst: images are nestled within images, much like the compartments of a Chinese box. Handheld shots of bustling street scenes and CNN footage documenting the end of the colonial era are set against the more seamless visual expanse of a larger story.



The romance of displacement: Gong Li and Jeremy Irons in love in "Chinese Box."

GEOFFREY PARKER

It is New Year's Eve, 1996, six months before Hong Kong will revert to Chinese control: wealthy residents and members of the press gather in banquet halls to toast the making of future deals, while in the poorer parts of the city women with worn-out faces operate produce stands and a man crushes soda cans with his feet to sell for scrap metal. John (Jeremy Irons) is a British journalist who has spent the last fifteen years in Hong Kong. (He has a family in England whose existence we know of only from messages on his answering machine.) He has written a book on how to make money in Asia, and offers a glib analysis of the upcoming political transition to a pretty and admiring journalist at a crowded New Year's party. "This great big department store," he says, "is just having a change of management." But, as he confides in a voice-over, he is truly transfixed not by Hong Kong's megabuck-making potential but by its air of feminine mystery: "Sometimes you just fall in love with a place without really knowing why, without ever really fully understanding it." He's also in love with Vivian (Gong Li), the beautiful girlfriend of a prosperous Chinese businessman (Michael Hui), and he fumblingly tries to engage her over the celebratory din. Fireworks explode in the night sky, a colleague of John's (Ruben Blades) explains to him as they pop hors d'œuvres that he "cannot photograph social crisis until somebody dies," and a young man obligingly shoots himself in the mouth to protest "the loss of personal and cultural freedom" that will follow the takeover.

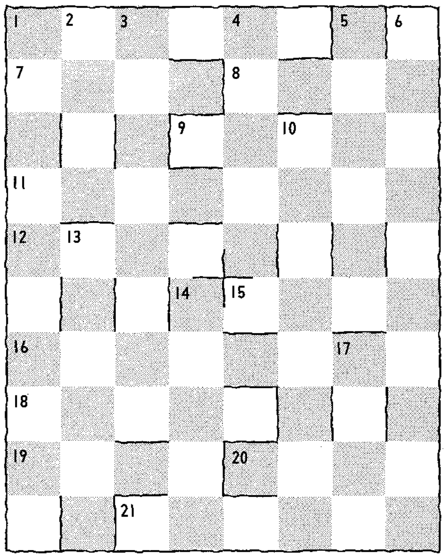
All this happens elliptically, less than ten minutes into the movie. We are pummelled by the sights, sounds, and feelings of John's world, and we are forced to watch the film in an improvisatory mode, picking our way between narrative ambiguities. Why won't Vivian, who seems to be drawn to John, go off with him, or at least become his lover? Why won't her tycoon boyfriend marry her? And what is it that John is trying to understand about Hong Kong? Before we have figured out whether these are the questions the film intends to answer, the story shifts abruptly (and a bit melodramatically): John, who has been suffering from fainting spells, is diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia and is given a few months to live. He quits his job and, joined by his photojournalist friend, takes to the streets with a video camera, wandering the underside of Hong Kong—the brothels, the betting parlors, and the markets where animals are slaughtered—in search of authentic images. Along the way, he becomes infatuated with Jean (Maggie Cheung), a young hippie-cum-hustler whose scarred face and freewheeling East Village style—headphones, a ratty scarf, high heels, and floppy, clownlike pants—make her an outcast in this hierarchical, status-conscious city. As the sordid truth of Vivian's past and the class conflict behind Jean's story emerge, John realizes that he understands "zilch," as he puts it, about his adoptive city and the forces that drive its inhabitants. He gives up trying to make sense of things, and has a brief, passionate interlude with Vivian before he dies.

This whimsical and often maudlin story line gets in the way of Wang's real focus, which is the impermeable nature of foreignness and the hazards of dislocation. There are those, I'm sure, for whom the film will seem no more than cinematic doodlings, artfully designed but maddeningly insubstantial. For me, though, the power of Wang's movie lies almost entirely in its ruminative subtext—the way it ducks the artifices of plot in order to seek out informal revelations of character and mood. Irons, looking more robust than he has in a while, even though he's meant to be dying, brings an unexpected warmth and poignancy to the role of the questing journalist. (His intelligence has often seemed brittle, almost malign, which is probably why he has so often been cast as a derelict or louche type.) Li, whose gravely expressive beauty has made her China's first superstar, plays Vivian as a classic survivor, a person of polished surfaces and repressed emotions. The screenplay, from a story by Jean-Claude Carrière, Paul Theroux, and Wang, is literate and interior—full of meandering, desultory conversation and articulate silences.

Wang was born and raised in Hong Kong; "Chinese Box," which combines the choppy rhythms of his "Chan Is Missing" (1982) with the more fluid touch he brought to "The Joy Luck Club" (1993), is his most personal and lyrical film. It is extraordinary to look at simply for its design and cut—for its ingenious layering of visual styles and its mutating colors. (Vilko Filac is the cinematographer.) You could say the movie is a movie director's movie, but that would be to overstate its purely technical interest and to underplay its emotional appeal. As Irons, the knapsack containing his expensive little camera slung over his shoulder, hunts out overlooked urban corners in the hope of preserving them before they vanish (at one point, he compares "Hong Kong before July" to "Pompeii before Vesuvius"), I was struck by the strength of his romantic longing in the face of the kinetic, impersonal life of the city. "I wonder if I can hold out longer than the British," he muses. "Not that I can be described as an empire." An elegant, sorrowful valentine to a lost homeland, "Chinese Box" will speak to anyone who has ever tried to take possession of a place or a person in the hope of taking possession of himself. ♦

8×10 CRYPTIC

NO. 41 BY MIKE SHENK



ACROSS

1 Gear part put in reverse with skill in kid's vehicle (2-4)
7 John, in Welsh church's center, facing the wrong way (4)
8 British school memo is returned (4)
9 Train station had drinks counter (5)
11 Careless California police in band (8)
12 Half of Uranus is on the far side of a certain atmosphere (4)
15 This author at South American plateau (4)
16 Spoken about stone overturned in site of shootout (2,6)
18 United Nations backing drunk up to a point? (5)
19 Arranged lone Christmas tune (4)
20 It's heard for every sound of contentment (4)
21 Auto with favorite floor mat (6)

DOWN

1 Outwits nature gods with morphing (4,6)
2 Love actor Kilmer's shape (4)
3 Small weight of gem turning up in cat's eye flaw (8)
4 Rushes and recites for the audience (5)
5 Hikes South in heavy footwear (6)
6 Vermont healer tries keeping vigilant (2,3,5)
10 Pages holding outline for glass alternative (5,3)
13 Remove one's tie? Not after well-built guy goes topless (6)
14 Cry on unveiling petroleum found in Virginia (5)
17 Race around bit of land (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 40 appears on page 99. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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WHEN I.R.S. EYES ARE SMILING

BY BRUCE McCALL

Form 1044
1997 Tax Return for I.R.S. Agents Only
(*Use invisible ink*)

U.S. Senate recommendations for the reformed I.R.S. include this new agent tax return. Remember to file early: all 1044 forms will be on a truck scheduled to be hijacked shortly after midnight, April 15th, and buried in a landfill.

☐ Check here if you wish to have $1 deducted for the post-burial corn roast.

IMPORTANT: Indicate which taxpayer's return you wish to have your $1 deducted from: ____________

And why (*check one*): ☐ Smart Aleck ☐ No Lawyer ☐ Dead

Line 1: Agent name: ________

Line 1a: Code name ("Viper," "Bloodsucker," etc.): ________

Line 2: Widow Jones is ordered to sell her budgie to pay a $1.25 penalty. She defaults. How soon do you kill the budgie? For each minute less than thirty, deduct $100 for Exemplary I.R.S. Zeal: ________

Line 3: State the total number of taxpayers you evicted in tax year 1997 for:

Inadvertent math errors _____
Forgetfulness (if over age 90) _____
Inability to read fine print _____
Total evictions: _____

Line 3a: Take the number of evictions from Line 3 and multiply by twenty-five. This is your 1998 sick-day bonus.

Total sick days: _____

Line 4: Deduct $500 for personal expenses accrued while calculating sick days: $_____

Line 4a: Deduct $10 if you feel queasy now: $_____

Line 5: If during 1997 you "brought along Old Grand-Dad" on a house call to explain new I.R.S. rules, got the taxpayer drunk, and altered his or her old 1040s to create penalties amounting to at least ten dollars, you qualify for a seven-day Caribbean vacation for two on any I.R.S.-seized yacht.

☐ Yes, I qualify. ☐ I qualify twice.

Line 6: In accordance with I.R.S. Reform Provision B/52, another agent can now turn you in for violating rules governing private use of seized property. You may also turn yourself in and win two tickets for any matinée performance of "Les Misérables."

Line 6a (*Optional*): I wish the full $150 value of my "Les Misérables" tickets to show up as hidden income in the next flash audit of (*check one*):

☐ The Ravenite Social Club
☐ Taxpayers for I.R.S. Reform
☐ Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Line 7: Claim a $1,000 tax credit for each of the following acts:

1. Seizing a taxpayer's wheelchair as penalty for not claiming enough of a medical deduction.
2. Disallowing a Keogh plan because the applicant was not named Keogh.
3. Seizing the collection plate in a Southern Baptist church and deducting entertainment tax.

Total credits: $________

Line 8: If Line 7 does not exceed the box-office gross for the motion picture "Titanic," you may choose your FREE BONUS GIFT from the items below, all handcrafted by taxpayers detained after unwittingly committing mail fraud by signing and sending the false returns you provided them.

☐ I.R.S. skeleton key ☐ I.R.S. false nose
☐ I.R.S. in-cookie bugging device

Line 9: Smith has a Cadillac. You have a Hyundai. Your district supervisor has a Rolls-Royce. How much must you pay your district supervisor to issue a back-tax seizure order for Smith's Cadillac? $________

What will you do with the Hyundai? ____________

(If you answered, "Stuff the trunk with Cuban money and arrest the Spanish-speaking citizen in front of whose house I just parked it," promote yourself one civil-service grade.)

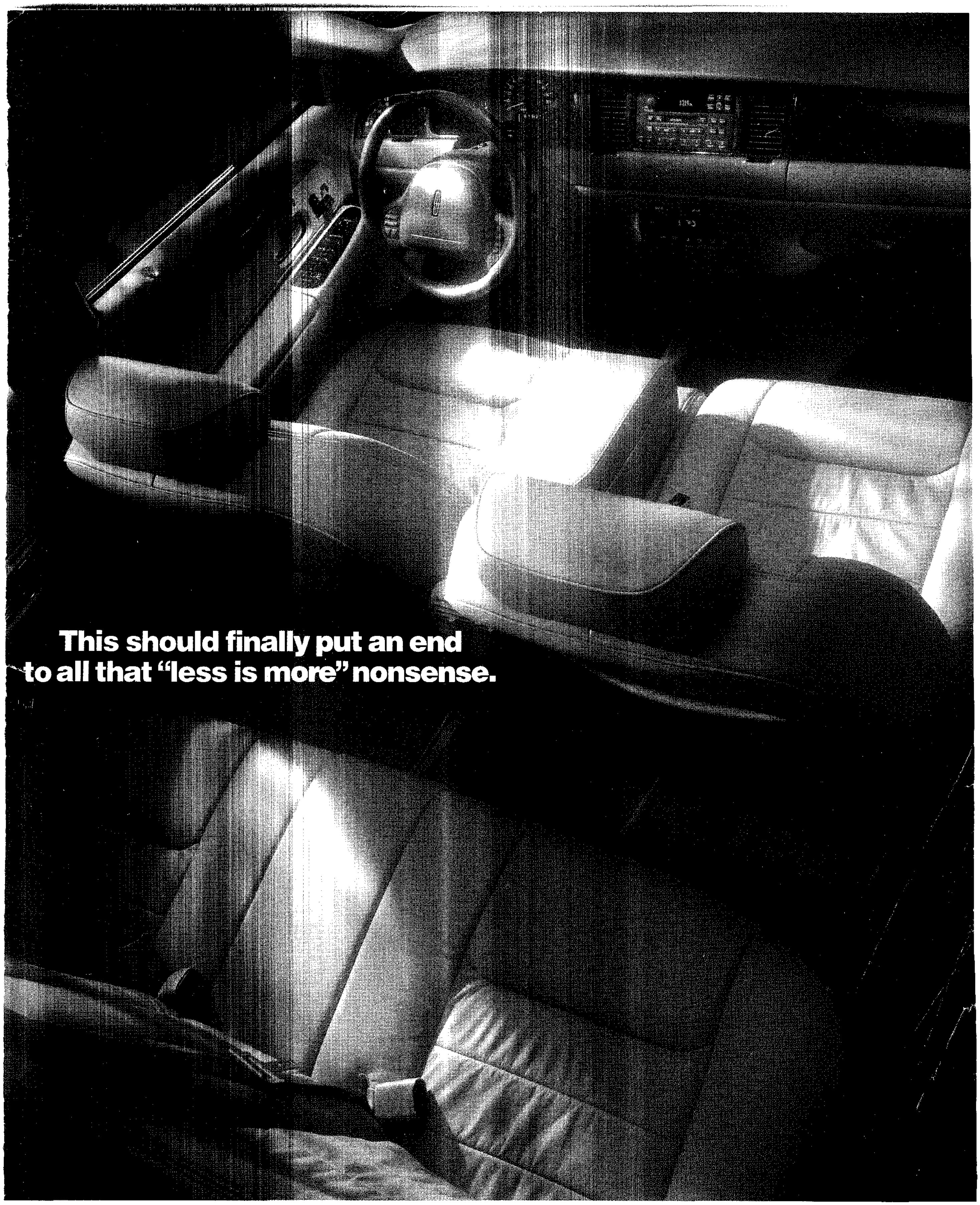
Line 10: Enter the total number of taxpayers you reduced to tears in 1997 with threats, bullying, cajolery, physical force, or ridicule: ________

(If figure is less than fifty, you may attend an I.R.S. Sadism Brush-Up Seminar without cost to you.)

Line 11: For mental pain and anguish you suffered while inflicting punishment on innocent taxpayers (Line 10), deduct the balance of any tax still owed by you. $________

Line 12: Sign here: ____________________

Lucky Line 13: If this reads "Lucky Line 13," you may take one month's paid leave to escort the new I.R.S. commissioner on a tour of tax-collection systems in Bali, Pago Pago, and Tahiti. Bring trunks! ♦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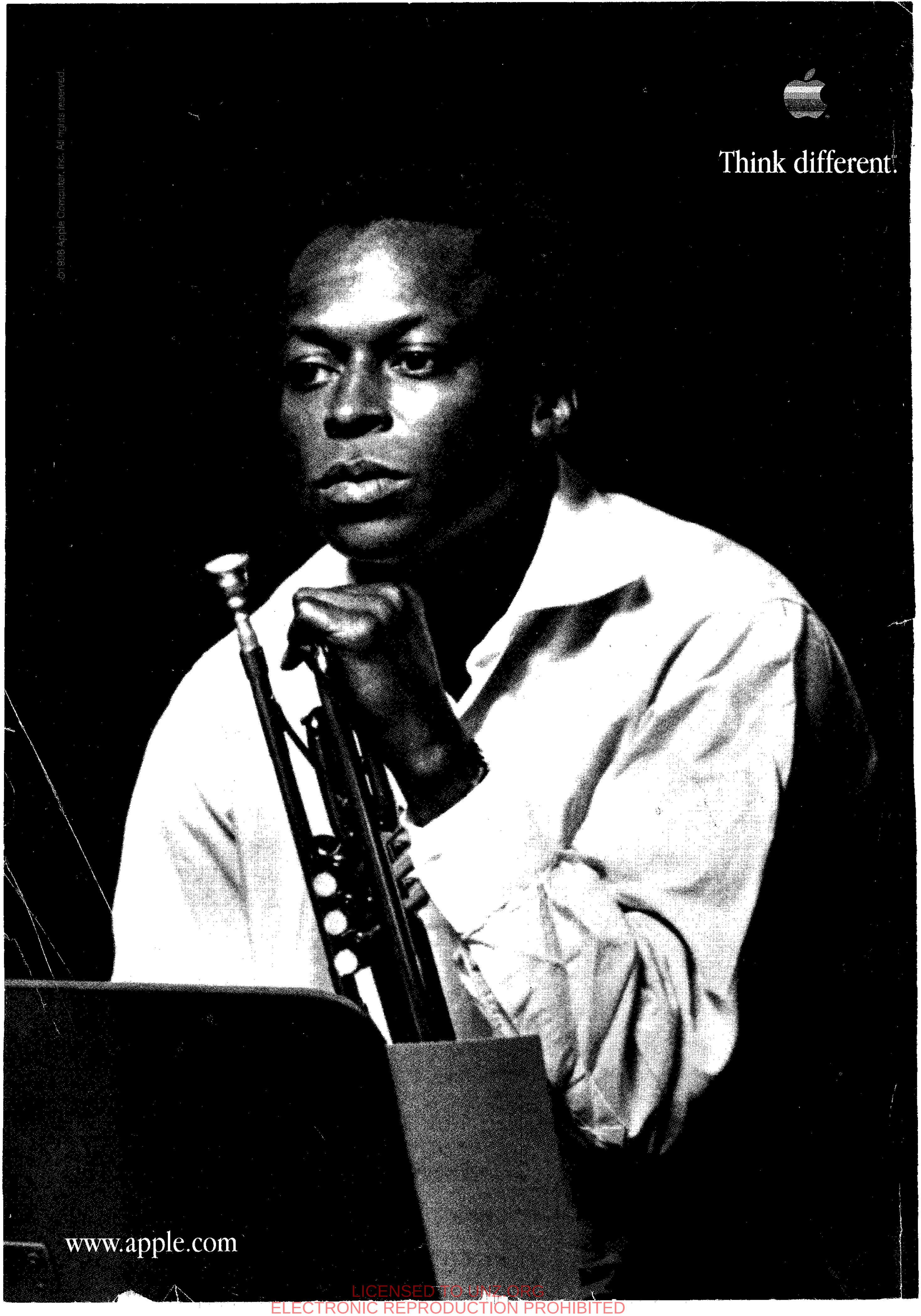
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